Empowering You to Love Yourself

Revised Edition

By Suzanne E. Harrill
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To Summarize
Introduction

It is almost universal to have issues with appreciating our innate goodness and worth. This book will expand your awareness by presenting many simple, yet deep, concepts and techniques to help you change how you feel about yourself and thus improve your experiences of life. It starts with your mind. When you consciously change your thinking, it impacts how you feel and consequently affects your choice of actions.

Much of our self-esteem is unconscious to us. Without knowing it, we repeat patterns and beliefs that were common in our childhood, both from society and from our family of origin. Many of the beliefs passed on to us are not the total truth. In fact, many are false, yet still influence us today, and many perpetuate low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem get random results in life because there is little responsibility taken for what happens to them. They feel that these circumstances are the effect of other people's moods and behaviors and outside circumstances. They keep repeating unwise habits, patterns, beliefs, and attitudes without much thought. Like a cork bobbing up and down in the ocean, people who suffer from low self-esteem are bounced around in life. Living this way seems normal because friends and family live the same way. There is limited power of aware choice, so it is common to feel powerless, like a victim of life's circumstances.

Each of us alone must take charge of our individual lives and determine the limiting patterns from which we want to free ourselves. It is empowering to know yourself and grow in awareness. Where do you start? It is helpful to observe yourself and think about what you see. Self-inquiry adds to the process where you question how you are living your life, your personality, and your relationships. You have to answer your own questions. Doing inner work becomes a way of life.

As you build your self-esteem and grow in confidence, you also grow in your inner powers, such as feeling inner strength and having positive attitudes. You are more able to use the power of free-will-choice. With choice, you see new directions to take, which increases your sense of well-being, satisfaction with your relationships, and actualizing your potential.

Even when we are seasoned travelers in self-discovery and have done much inner work, unconscious patterns can still catch us off guard. We still grow in awareness and it changes us. Expanded awareness more easily allows us to see our issues and break out of old patterns; we grow in our ability to make wiser choices to ensure better results in our futures.

Each of you can only begin to heal from where you are today. Step by step you can gather new information by reading, taking classes, and by journaling. As you write about your problems and issues, receive counseling, and talk to people more aware than yourself, you receive support. You also gain insights into your situations. Once you have more insight, support, and understanding of your issues, you begin taking risks to change your habits, beliefs, and patterns.

Let me give an illustration from my life. One of my secrets is that I can easily lose my power and become passive if someone is negative, critical, or
verbally rude towards me. Because I do not come from that intention, I can easily deny that anything negative is going on. Yet, I experience many bodily sensations, such as a knot in my stomach, a racing heartbeat, or a feeling that I want to hide and be by myself. I now know to pay attention to my body awareness because it clues me in that I need to spend time alone with myself to figure out what is going on below the surface of my awareness. Later I may make a choice to confront someone or it may simply be enough to know that I am working on changing my passive reactions and will do it differently the next time it arises.

I remember one situation and how I dealt with it. A woman who sold my books said she would not pay for one of the orders because she had no record of it being delivered. My first response was to feel powerless and that I must be wrong. I could not verbalize anything to support myself, so I quickly got off the phone. I watched myself repeat a common pattern, backing off when a dominant person insists they are right and wants their own way at the expense of mine. I do not like power struggles, so early in life I learned to retreat. Being the adult that I am now, I knew I did nothing wrong and that I must stand up for myself in order to get paid. What did I do next? I spent time by myself to identify what I was feeling: taken advantage of and angry. I figured out a couple of limiting guiding beliefs that I needed to update. One such belief was, It is safer to withdraw when another is angry because I am unable to find my voice. I changed it to, I speak my truth and stand up for myself even if I feel fearful and the other person gets angry. I then went through my last year's records to find the UPS slip and track down when it was delivered and who had signed for it. In this case, it was fairly easy to back myself with data. It was difficult for me, however, to call the woman back and tell her the details which proved I was right. I felt short of breath and anxious as I dialed the number, just as I did as a child. I continued saying supportive, positive things to this inner child of the past, "You can confront this woman, you haven't done anything wrong. Take some deep, slow breaths and feel your inner strength." I ended up making the call, confronting politely, and getting paid.

Later, I continued my inner work. I set aside time to think about myself and this situation, journaling, saying affirmations to myself, and updating more limited thinking patterns. This empowered me and got me back on track, into my adult self. Clues to why I had this fearful, passive response were gained by looking at how my parents communicated, handled conflict, disciplined me, and how they dealt with the strong emotion of anger. I am not about blaming my parents; after all they had parents too. I also am a parent and had good intentions; even if some of the time I passed on negative stuff to my children. It serves no one to blame another for our problems; in fact that attitude actually keeps us stuck being a victim and maintaining our low self-esteem. The responsibility and power for healing and changing patterns, beliefs, and behaviors resides within each of us today.

When new to self-discovery and self-inquiry, it is not easy for us to look at our family of origin as contributing to some of our problems. Why? It is usually many little things from childhood that affect us as an adult. It is common to discount the effect of the past by saying things to ourselves like, “What right do I have to complain when other people have it so much worse?
In observing myself, I noticed that many times I resonated with the pain of someone who had experienced blatant traumas. Over time I learned that when we over-identify with another's pain, we have hidden pain within ourselves. I learned to feel and address the emotional pain within myself, in spite of the fact that my childhood looked so much better. Obviously, there was more pain in my family system than met the eye, and it affected me very deeply.

Yes, I acknowledge that there were many positives that my parents gave me; such as, love, tremendous will power, and appreciation for my traits and abilities. They gave me autonomy to make my own choices in life, encouragement to be creative, and permission to think and question life. At first I felt disloyal to my parents when looking at the things that caused pain; yet, over time I grew to simply see the whole picture, the positive and the negative without judgment.

May this book inspire you to change your thinking, improve how you feel, and learn new ways of living. The focus is on self-healing and taking personal responsibility for your own life. Taking positive risks will help you begin clearing away unwanted patterns and behaviors and you will grow to uncover your true nature, discovering your spiritual essence. Who you really are is so much bigger than the family and issues into which you were born. You have the power to get back to basics, being your true Self.

Let us begin with the Acorn Analogy on the following page which summarizes the teachings of this book.

Fortunate Blessings,
Suzanne
The Acorn Analogy

Deep inside you know how to be you, as an acorn knows how to be a mighty oak.

The acorn does the best it can do at each stage of growth along its life path.

Even if the early start was less than perfect, the eager oak accelerates its desire to grow every time it receives nurturing from nature: sunlight, rainwater, and soil nutrients.

YOU are like the acorn doing your best under the conditions in which you are growing.

Nurture yourself with awareness, acceptance, love, self-respect, and self-esteem, then watch yourself grow towards your full-potential Self!

How I Wrote The Acorn Analogy

It is an interesting story how The Acorn Analogy appeared. Many years ago, when my youngest daughter was four years old, I would meditate for twenty minutes before picking her up from preschool. I was asked to present two teacher in-service trainings the following month. During one of my meditations I saw myself handing out real acorns to the teachers and explaining, in a more expanded way, the ideas summarized in the analogy. I went to the first training with my acorns, which my daughter enthusiastically helped me find, but did not hand them out. Why? Because I listened to my negative self-talk which stopped me. Guess what happened? The next week, right before the second presentation, I had the same exact vision of giving out the acorns. I looked up and said, “I get it.” For years I handed out acorns whenever I gave a talk. Acorns are a great symbol, reminding us that inside each of us is our full of potential, true Self waiting for self-nurturing to grow and actualize. Pick up the next acorn you see.
Part I: Getting Started

Learn to Love Yourself

It was a rude awakening to find that many of our problems stemmed from low self-esteem and not loving ourselves. I first came in contact with many of the ideas presented here when I taught a college course in 1979 in Thibodaux, LA. Part of the curriculum was building the self-esteem of the students. We used materials written by the late L.S. Barksdale. While teaching my students, I found I was learning as much, or more than they were about self-esteem.

One thing that really impacted me was that I am the only one responsible for loving me. No longer could I be the victim of other people’s moods and low self-esteem, expecting unconditional love outside of myself. To this day, I must remember to put into practice all that I will teach you. I still have to override some of my first responses to people who are having a bad day and are rude or angry. I may feel hurt initially, but, I “catch” myself more quickly now and change my internal responses. This was not the case when I was new to the journey of self-discovery.

The process of healing low self-esteem begins with a decision to love yourself. If you are reading this book you have already made this decision. We will begin working with your mind. Even though your thoughts, feelings, and behavior are all interrelated, it is helpful to start by looking at your thoughts and beliefs. Again, you can begin improving how you feel about yourself by changing your thoughts and beliefs.

It is time to take the Self-Esteem Awareness Inventory on the next page. Simply answering the questions will begin to raise your awareness about self-esteem.
Self-Esteem Awareness Inventory

Rate yourself on each with a scale of 0 to 4 based upon your current thoughts, feelings, and behaviors: 0 = I never think, feel, or behave this way. 1 = I do less than half the time. 2 = I do 50% of the time. 3 = I do more than half the time. 4 = I always think, feel, or behave this way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Self-Esteem Statements</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>1. I like and accept myself as I am right now, today, even as I grow and evolve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>2. I am worthy simply for who I am, not what I do. I do not have to earn my worthiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>3. I get my needs met before meeting the wants of others. I balance my needs with those of my partner and family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>4. I easily release negative feelings from other’s judgments and focus instead on living my life with integrity and to the best of my abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>5. I always tell myself the truth about what I am feeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>6. I am incomparable and stop comparing myself with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>7. I feel of equal value to other people, regardless of my performance, looks, IQ, achievements, or possessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>8. I am my own authority. I make decisions with the intention of furthering my own and others’ best interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>9. I learn and grow from my mistakes rather than deny them or use them to confirm my unworthiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>10. I stop my critical self-talk and replace it with a nurturing, kind, encouraging voice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. I love, respect, and honor myself.
12. I am not responsible for anyone else’s actions, needs, choices, thoughts, moods, or feelings, only for my own.
13. I do not dominate others or allow others to dominate me.
14. I have good physical and emotional boundaries with others.
15. I feel my own feelings and think my own thoughts, even when those around me think or feel differently.
16. I stop using “shoulds” and “oughts,” which are value judgments that put me or another down. (It is irrelevant what I should have done or should do. It is more important to know what I am willing to do and not do.)
17. I am responsible for changing what I do not like in my life. I face my problems, fears, and insecurities and take appropriate steps to heal and grow.
18. I am a person of my word and follow through on the things I commit to do.
19. I forgive myself and others for making mistakes and being unaware.
20. I believe my life counts. I find meaning and have purpose in my life.
21. I deserve love and happiness even when others blame or criticize me, for I cannot control what others think about me.
22. I take care of myself on all levels: physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual.
23. I spend quality time with myself on a regular basis.
24. I release unreal expectations for myself and others.
25. I choose to love and respect all human beings regardless of their beliefs and actions; some I have a personal relationship with and most I do not.
How to Use This Information

The Self-Esteem Awareness Inventory is not a test or a precise measure of self-esteem. Instead, it identifies beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that contribute to your self-esteem. The 25 statements can be used to update beliefs that have limited your self-esteem. Use the statements as affirmations, positive statements, to change and improve how you talk to yourself. Repeat the statements to yourself often, emphasizing your low scoring answers. Over time improving your self-talk will help change old, outdated beliefs that keep you stuck in low self-esteem.

It is unwise to compare your answers with anyone else’s, that is, unless sharing opens healthy discussion between the two of you.

Save your answers and date it. Answer the questions again every few months to notice your progress and the areas you still need to emphasize.

Another idea is to write your low-scoring statements on 3x5 cards. Read them out loud to yourself daily. Tape them in places you will see often: refrigerator, desk drawer, bathroom mirror, your purse or wallet. You will see growth and improvement as you work on your lower scoring areas. Be mindful of not judging the speed of your progress. Grow and expand your awareness at your own rate.

If many of your answers are low, you will notice quick improvement by working with these 25 statements and applying the information in this book. All of the parts of you are interdependent so a gain in one area strengthens your entire self.

A side benefit in working with the inventory is to notice where other people have self-esteem issues. You can grow in compassion as you learn to identify when another is struggling with self-esteem issues. This makes it a little easier to forgive negative attitudes and behaviors in others as well.
Part II: What Is Self-Esteem?

What Is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself. You consciously and unconsciously send thoughts, images, feelings, and opinions about yourself to yourself. These can be accurate and helpful or they can be false and damaging.

“Self-Esteem, on a subtle and often unconscious level, is an emotion, how warm and loving you actually feel toward yourself, based on your individual sense of personal worth and importance. It is how you feel about yourself.”

L.S. Barksdale, Building Self-Esteem

What is HIGH Self-Esteem?

High self-esteem is a feeling of total acceptance and love for yourself as you are. It is respecting and valuing yourself as a worthwhile human being. It is honestly seeing your good and not-so-good points. And, it is taking responsibility for your life, making choices to learn and grow, and taking care of and nurturing yourself so you can become all you are capable of being.

High self-esteem is a quiet, comfortable place of enjoying and accepting who you are. It is knowing your innate worth comes from the Source of your being.

How Do You Build Self-Esteem?

Besides working to improve your beliefs about yourself, as we discussed with the Self-Esteem Awareness Inventory, there are more things you can do. To build self-esteem it is important to listen to what you say to yourself. Flip the negative thoughts and self-talk to positive ones. You benefit from consciously thinking, feeling, and saying positive, honest things to yourself in your mind with your self-talk. More ideas unfold as you read the book.
Myths About Self-Esteem

Myth #1: Self-esteem is earned. (False)

Truth: Self-esteem is your birthright and cannot be earned. It is a gift from the Source of your being to be accepted by you with no strings attached. You are a valuable, worthwhile human being, a part of the greater whole of life.

Myth #2: Good looks, good jobs, and high I.Q. insure a person has high self-esteem. (False)

Truth: Society praises certain traits which often are not all that healthy, like youth and strength and winning. What happens when a beautiful woman ages if she bases her worth on her physical characteristics only? Is she any less worthy? NO! What happens when an athlete can no longer make big money because of physical injuries? Is he/she any less worthy? NO! High self-esteem is an inner experience. People who base their sense of worth on their physical traits or on high achievement hoping to gain attention or appreciation from others suffer when it ends. Emotional well-being depends more on what is going on within a person and how well one knows oneself. It depends on how aware one is of his or her needs and how to get them met in healthy ways. Emotional wellness includes how to connect to other people and much more. Do not assume good looks, jobs, or I.Q. automatically give one healthy self-esteem. By the way there is nothing wrong with being all you can be, attractive and high achieving, however, the motivation needs to be from the inside not from the outside in.

Myth #3: Having high self-esteem is being narcissistic. (False)

Truth: To heal low self-esteem it is important to know yourself. It is necessary to focus on yourself for a while to get to know who you are, to heal and make peace with the past. You must make wise choices and open to your creative potential. Narcissism is a diagnostic term used by mental health professionals to classify a person for treatment
purposes. It is an infantile state where a person is stuck emotionally in the past and unable to think beyond self or relate well with others. With high self-esteem a person is responsive to others, as well as self.

**Myth #4:** When you love yourself too much, you will take advantage of and hurt others. (False)

**Truth:** When loving and respecting yourself, you automatically love and respect others and want to act responsibly. You grow into seeing everyone as an extension of yourself and work towards knowing when it is appropriate to put your needs before another’s and vice versa. It is important to be responsible to yourself and at the same time responsive to others.

**Myth #5:** It is bad to love and think highly of yourself. You will become obnoxious and brag about yourself. (False)

**Truth:** It is good to love and think highly of yourself. It allows you to grow and heal, take risks, and express your potential. A person who loves him/herself is better able to understand and forgive those who brag about themselves and push themselves and their ideas on others (both symptoms of low self-esteem). High self-esteem is a quiet comfortable place of being with self.

**Myth #6:** If you love yourself too much, you will not be able to love others. (False)

**Truth:** You can only love others to the degree that you love yourself. You cannot give what you do not have.

**Myth #7:** High self-esteem comes from being appreciated and admired by others. (False)

**Truth:** High self-esteem comes from an internal validation of self, not from an external validation of self. Any time you depend on others
to gain good feelings about yourself, those feelings evaporate when the others are not around, are having their own problems, or have low self-esteem. Do not turn your power to experience love over to others. Rather, turn inward and receive love from the Spiritual Source of your being. It is good to enjoy love and appreciation when others do give it, just do not get dependent on their appreciation or recognition.
Characteristics of High Self-Esteem

To empower yourself in building your self-esteem, it is useful to know where you are headed. The following is a partial list of characteristics of high self-esteem:

- Remembering to honor yourself from within (positive self-talk, feeling inner worth) and detaching from the negative comments, judgments, and opinions of others.

- Spending time with people who accept, encourage, and support you, rather than people who are superficial, critical, or whom you have little in common.

- Learning from mistakes and being able to say, “I made a mistake, I’m sorry.”

- Taking responsibility for your own perceptions and reactions and not projecting onto others.

- Ability to listen to your inner self and act on this guidance.

- Growing in self-respect, self-confidence, and self-acceptance and not expecting it to come from others.

- Honestly assessing your strengths and weakness without excessive pride or shame.

- Recognizing areas of yourself needing improvement and areas needing acceptance.

- Growing in awareness and taking positive risks.

- Balancing activities with quiet, quality, alone time.

- Accepting consequences of your choices, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
• Catching negative self-talk and changing it to a positive, supportive voice.

• Desiring to grow and improve.
• Being your own best friend.

• Feeling worthy of love and respect.

• Liking yourself.

• Knowing yourself and only trying to be you.

• Being respectful and kind to yourself and others.

• Accepting yourself even if you want some parts of you changed.

• Taking responsibility for your own life. Admitting when you have a problem or make a mistake.

• Feeling a sense of social responsibility that goes beyond self

• Developing your talents and interests.

• Standing up for yourself, being assertive, not aggressive.

• Feeling capable of living a productive life with meaning and purpose

Add to this list by observing yourself and the people around you.
Some Reasons Why People Have Low Self-Esteem

A few of the more common reasons people develop low self-esteem are:

• Believing the negative and hurtful words and actions of others.

• Living with people who do not love and respect others.

• Having negative thoughts about performance, appearance, family, socio-economic level, and I.Q., among others.

• Being over- or under-protected as a child.

• NOT being taught, “I am good and of value and loved no matter what.”

• Doubting that you were loved by one or both parents (the absence of a parent hurts, too).

• Being punished without ever being taught to separate “you” from your bad behavior.

• Living in fear.

• Being compared to others or to perfect standards that could not be met.

• Being raised in a dysfunctional family.

• Thinking “you” are your possessions, clothes, car, grades, job, or I.Q., rather than the inner self experiencing them.

• Not learning from your mistakes.

• Forgetting that you have a wise, intuitive, inner self.

• Forgetting that you are a spiritual being.
Recognizing People With Low Self-Esteem

How do you know if you or someone you know is suffering from low self-esteem? You receive clues by noticing extremes in people’s behaviors, thinking patterns, and emotional responses. Following are characteristics of people with behaviors of low self-esteem, thoughts of low self-esteem, and feelings of low self-esteem. Add to these lists by observing yourself and the people around you.

Some Behaviors of Low Self-Esteem

• Hurting yourself in any way.
• Being a bully or hurting others.
• Saying mean or abusive things to others.
• Not keeping your body, hair, or clothes clean.
• Not speaking up for yourself.
• Talking too much or too little.
• Needing to always be first or last.
• Gossiping or making fun of others.
• Breaking things or defacing property.
• Taking things that do not belong to you.
• Over- or under-eating.
• Not trying new things because you might make a mistake.
• Using alcohol or drugs to stop your pain, to hide your feelings, or to avoid solving problems.
Some Thoughts of Low Self-Esteem

- Thinking you are better than someone who differs from you.
- Thinking others are better than you.
- Thinking mean or negative things in your mind about yourself.
- Believing, “I don’t count. My life does not matter.”
- Thinking with “shoulds” or “oughts.”
- Secretly hoping someone will fail or hurt him/herself.
- Thinking only one way — your way — is right.
- Forgetting to think about improving your life.
- Pretending everything is “okay,” when it is not.
- Thinking you don’t need anybody or any help.
- Thinking you can’t make it without a partner (codependent).
- Blaming others when things do not go your way.
- Thinking prejudicial thoughts or scapegoating another person or group of people.
- Dominating others with your opinions or values.
- Being intolerant of individual differences.
- Not liking to look at your beliefs, values, and opinions in order to update them.
- Needing to be “right.”
Some FEELINGS of Low Self-Esteem

- Feeling hatred, resentment, or a desire to get even.
- Feeling that you must be perfect to be okay.
- Feeling jealous and possessive.
- Feeling wounded or hurt when others with low self-esteem put you down.
- Often feeling angry or sad when you don’t know why.
- Feeling embarrassed or shameful when you haven’t done anything wrong.
- Crying a lot.
- Isolating yourself from others.
- Feeling lonely much of the time.
- Feeling too much dependency on another.
- Feeling a sense of failure and depression.
- Feeling unworthy of love and happiness.
- Feeling fearful of taking positive risks.
- Emotionally reacting to people and events instead of responding.
- Fearing that you are not able to take care of yourself.
- Feeling powerless to overcome negative habits and compulsions
What Keeps Low Self-Esteem Alive?

- Denying hurtful feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions about yourself.
- Believing it is shameful or unnecessary to get help or to admit shortcomings.
- Saying negative things to yourself with the talk inside your mind (self-talk).
- Staying so busy that you do not have time to feel emotional pain.
- Expecting life or others to meet your emotional needs and not taking responsibility for your own life.
- Not updating the beliefs and values that were handed to you from childhood.
- Not working to understand your emotional triggers (reactions to people and events).
- Believing you are a victim of life and do not have any power to improve things.
- Being passive, being fear-ridden, and not taking positive risks.
- Not reading self-help books and/or not going to self-growth classes or therapy.
Part III: The Eight Keys to Loving Yourself

Now we are ready to look at some important concepts that can help you learn to love yourself. As you begin to think more positively, you will notice a shift in how you feel about yourself. Eventually your behavior will change to support the shifts in your thinking and feelings.

Following are eight important keys to help you think in a more positive, healthy way towards yourself. Some of you may already know these key concepts to loving yourself. If so, they are here to remind you of what you already know. Others of you may find these concepts new and different from what you have been taught. If they are a stretch for your mind, go slowly and ponder them for a while. Remember, the concepts and the perceptions you hold at present about life may not have taught you how to build your self-esteem and to love yourself. You are looking for information outside of your frame-of-reference to help you solve your problems, heal, grow, and evolve.

The Eight Keys to Loving Yourself

1. Accept yourself as you are right now.

2. Look inside yourself, not outside yourself, to feel good.

3. Stop value-judging yourself.

4. Separate “YOU” from your behavior.

5. Stop comparing yourself to others or to a “perfect” standard.

6. Know you are doing your best.

7. Know you are worthy of unconditional love.

8. Take responsibility for your life.
1. Accept Yourself as You Are Right Now

How do you accept yourself right now just the way you are with no strings attached? Most of us think immediately of all the things not right with our lives, our personalities, or our bodies, and all the things we want to change. That is limited thinking that perpetuates low self-esteem. Yes, you will be an improved version of yourself tomorrow, however, why miss the opportunity today to feel good? Now is your place of power. You are okay just the way you are, even if you want to change parts of your self.  

The Acorn Analogy helps us to see that the oak tree is perfect at each stage of its growth — as a seedling, as a sapling, a medium tree, a large tree, and as a full grown tree. You are like that tree growing and evolving into your full Self. You build your self-esteem and empower yourself by remembering that, like the oak, you are beauty and perfection at each place along your life path, continuously evolving. At the very least, practice accepting yourself right now the way you are.  

It no longer serves you to wait until the future to love yourself. Talk back to the mind chatter that says such things as, “I’ll be happy and love myself when I get my degree” or “when I lose weight” or “when I am a parent.” Keep reminding yourself about your new aware beliefs, because the sooner you learn to accept yourself, now, as you are the better you will feel.  

The paradox is that this attitude of acceptance right now, is the ingredient required to create what you want in your future behaviors, attitudes, and goals. Self improvement is easier when you accept who you are first and see it as a never ending process, a way of life.  

Affirmation:  

It is always right now and I love myself today!

2. Look Inside Yourself, Not Outside Yourself, to Feel Good  

High self-esteem requires a person to have an internal locus of control or center of power. People with low self-esteem have an external locus of control. This external validation of self was
necessary as a child; that was how we learned at first. It is natural to
need love and approval from parents and teachers when we are young
and taking in life. As young teenagers we paid a lot of attention to our
peers, furthering our dependency on external validation of self. The
problem is most of the people loving us did so to the degree they loved
themselves, which many times did not teach us a lot about sound self-
esteeem.

There comes a time when a shift begins to take place for those
seeking higher awareness. Slowly we learn to let go of an external
locus of control and move in the direction of an internal locus of
control. It is kind of like the waning and waxing of the moon, it
happens slowly.

As you observe, many adults never grow beyond this external
level of needing acceptance; and thus, get caught in “keeping up with
the Joneses.” It is necessary to make the leap from external validation
of self to an internal validation of self to truly empower ourselves with
high self esteem.

Practice daily looking inside yourself and stop looking outside
yourself to feel good. When you get caught up in what you have been
taught, such as to evaluate your self-worth by outer appearances and
accomplishments — looks, educational degree, cars, houses, children,
and other people’s opinions of you, stop right then. Remind yourself
of your new reality. Talk to yourself and keep reminding yourself that
sound self-esteem must come from within you and not from the outer
world. You still pay attention to and respond to what is happening
“out there” — the weather, economic cycles, family, jobs, etc. Your
focus needs to stay within yourself and then you can stay conscious of
how you personally want to deal with the outer world. These outer
factors continually shift and change. Focusing within stabilizes you
and keeps you from being tossed and turned with the ups and downs of
life.

High self-esteem emphasizes the inner self that many of us have
forgotten with our current lifestyles. There is nothing wrong with
participating with “out there,” we all do. For example, there is nothing
wrong with listening to what others have to say about you and
listening to their feedback. In fact, this can be useful if you respect the
person. The important thing is that you must ultimately rely on
yourself and not on the opinions of other people to feel good about
yourself.
Affirmation:

I build my good feelings by looking within and connecting with my true Self.

3. Stop Value-Judging Yourself

   Being judgmental towards yourself or another lowers self-esteem. It is helpful to drop “shoulds” and “oughts” from your vocabulary. Why? They are a form of value-judging yourself. What good does it do to mull over in your mind what you should have done in the past or should do in the future? You did what you did because of your level of awareness. When you nag yourself and think you should do something, it is more important to ask yourself what you are or are not willing to do now. Then do it or let it go. Of course you have to be willing to pay the consequences of your choice if you let it go.

   When you say or think to another, “You should...,” you really mean, “If I were you, I would...” Since no two people have exactly the same early environment, life experiences, genes, perceptions, and beliefs about life, it is unfair to expect others to do what you would do in their place. If you use “shoulds” and “oughts” with others, know that you are probably doing the same thing to yourself.

   When you use an “I should” message in your mind, your self-talk is telling you that you should feel guilty for not doing something, which is more than likely somebody else’s value system or wish for you. If you do not have the will to carry out the “I should” message, it is important to spend time with yourself, a friend, or a counselor to see whether you really want to do the “I should” or not. It is important to get in touch with the consequences of your choices and to make sure they fit in with your value system.

   It serves no purpose to beat yourself up mentally when you are unable to do what you wish you could do, for example, put too many of the ideas in this book into practice immediately. Reminding yourself that you are working in that direction and that change is a continual process can help give you patience.
Some teachers and managers believe it is good to use “shoulds.” A teacher once asked in a workshop, “If I don’t put ‘You should have...’ on a student’s paper, what do I write?” This is a very important question for people in positions of authority. Feedback is important, yet, only emphasizing errors perpetuates low self-esteem in others, especially when they have an external locus of control. After finding a positive, you can say things like, “You could... the next time,” or “It is helpful to...,” or simply state the facts, such as, “needs more detail,” or “no main idea,” or “illegible — neater handwriting required to pass.” There does not need to be a value-judgment placed on the worth of the student when giving constructive feedback. If the student did poorly, that is information, not a reason to make him or her feel “inferior and unworthy.”

Affirmation:

I make wise choices for myself and take the time to consider the consequences I am willing to pay. When willing to pay the price of a choice, I go forward; when not willing, I make a different choice. (Not choosing is a choice).

4. Separate “You” From Your Behavior

You are not your behavior, but the one who behaves. You can dislike a behavior, habit, or pattern without disliking yourself.

If you have a behavior that you do not like in yourself, know there is a reason for this negative behavior. When you discover your hidden needs and intentions you will improve your choices of behavior, because you will see what is motivating you. Your needs motivate you to act in certain ways based on your guiding beliefs. Different people may get the same need met with different actions depending on the background, beliefs, values, and perceptions of each. The more aware you are, the wiser your choices of behavior will be. Thinking affects your behavior and you can think better if you are kind to yourself. Problem-solving is an important part of feeling good. You do this better when you are able to objectively look at your behavior aside from the innate worth of your inner self. Journal writing or talking to someone helps.
If you have a behavior that you do not like in yourself, you raise your level of self-esteem by remembering that you are okay even if your behavior is not. If someone close to you behaves in a manner that is unacceptable to you, it is important to communicate that it is their behavior you do not like and that you always love them as a person. Practice separating “YOU” from what you do.

Affirmation:

I am getting to know my inner self so I wisely choose my behavior.

5. Stop Comparing Yourself to Others or to a “Perfect” Standard

If you do one thing today to improve your sense of well-being, catch yourself whenever you compare yourself and stop. This happens many times in social settings when we feel uncomfortable. However, some people can do it alone comparing themselves to a younger version of themselves or to a standard too high to meet. You lower your self-esteem when you compare yourself. No one is “better than” or “less than” anyone else.

You have only to be you. Perfection is a goal, not a standard to measure your worthiness. If you must compare, do it only with yourself to gauge your progress and to set goals.

Competition and comparison are part of most people’s upbringing. Most of our schools, sports, jobs, and parenting styles are set up this way. There is a current belief that competition and comparison are healthy and necessary. However, the way we view competition tends to produce low self-esteem. When you compare yourself with someone else to get your good feelings, there will always be a winner and a loser. Life is not a race. We all live our life path in our own way and in our own time. Standards of excellence are necessary to gauge progress and mastery, but are not a measurement of our worthiness. Other people may still use competition incorrectly, but you do not have to buy into it.

Rather than competing with others, pay attention to what your gifts are and develop them. Everyone has at least one gift and it will serve you to find out what yours is. It does not matter whether your gift makes you “Number One” in some widely appreciated activity, or
just makes you quite good at something you enjoy. It can be an abstract gift such as being able to understand what other people (or animals) are feeling or communicating, gardening, talking to children, etc. It does not matter whether or not it has competitive value. To figure out what your gifts are pay attention to what your interests are and what you observe in others that you would like to experience.

Affirmation:

I am incomparable. I am who I am.

6. Know You Are Doing Your Best

You can only do what you do and get results desired based on your level of awareness. If you want more, you must expand your consciousness by gathering new information from teachers, self-help books, counselors, and observing others you admire to expand your choices.

It is unfair to label a person as an underachiever. The measurement is usually one dimensional, like measuring grade performance. There are many parts of you — physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Just because you have the IQ points to get high grades, you don’t automatically get them. Other factors influence performance, such as what is going on emotionally. Negative beliefs can also limit your success. Honor your resistances as they give you clues about the inner work needed to get past an impasse.

Sometimes when you can not achieve the results you say you want in one area of your life, work on another area, because all parts of you are interconnected. A positive change in one area affects and helps all of you. You might have heard success breeds success.

Remember that each person has a different level of awareness based on his/her early programming, perceptions, life experiences, beliefs, genes, etc. You can act only out of your present level of awareness to meet your current needs. If you are unaware of your needs, you may be surprised at some of your behavior. When you are unhappy with your behavior, even if you have been capable of acting the way you wanted to in the past, it is helpful to look at your needs. Your needs may be competing with each other and some of them may
be unhealthy. When you become aware of your hidden needs, you will see the conflicts that keep you stuck. Awareness gives us choices.

Take the example of wanting to be thinner. You decide to limit sugar intake. The first couple of days you do fine, but then you find yourself overeating sweets on the third day. Rather than shame and blame yourself with critical mind talk, do some inner work. Observe yourself. What motivated the binging on sugar? What are your needs that motivated the behavior? Are any in conflict with each other? Even though you have a need to weigh less, you find there is a deeper, stronger need to feel comfortable. When you are stressed, do not eat breakfast, or have an argument with a family member you discover you reach for sweets to settle yourself down. Your needs are in conflict. To get the results you want, you must learn how to manage stress differently, maybe by deep breathing, not skipping meals, or writing in a journal. To practice knowing that you are always doing your best, remember the Acorn Analogy.

**Affirmation:**

*I nurture myself today with awareness and good thoughts so the new seed thoughts can grow.*

**7. Know You Are Worthy of Unconditional Love**

It is important to learn to love yourself unconditionally in order to feel good about yourself. (Substitute the word accept if love is not comfortable.) Unconditional love is what the Greeks called agape love — love that has no reasons and no boundaries. It simply is love given without an expectation of a return.

Conditional love, on the other hand, has to be earned, and there are expectations placed on either yourself or another in order to be loved. Examples of conditional love are: “I would love myself if I were thinner or if I had more money.” “I love you as long as you meet my expectations and please me.”

Being worthy cannot be earned by your accomplishments or your behaviors. It is a gift to be accepted by you from Life, the Creator. You are worthy because you exist — it is your birthright.
Practice loving yourself unconditionally daily because it is unlikely many others know how to do this for you. With unconditional love you are worthy simply because you are alive. There are no reasons for this love and acceptance. In the process of learning to love unconditionally you need to see where you have placed expectations on your love and acceptance and then let them go. It is an ingredient of sound self-esteem to love yourself unconditionally first, which then allows you to love others unconditionally.

Unconditionally loving others does not mean you have to be around and tolerate negative behavior from another. You can set boundaries and at the same time choose to love another regardless of the behavior exhibited. Compassion and understanding help you forgive bad behavior so you can love unconditionally. Unconditionally loving yourself is important because we all go through the process of aging. Some of us have the challenge of being ill or are physically impaired. Stop over-identifying with your body and love the “You” that lives in your body.

If you still cannot accept this concept of unconditional love, think of yourself as a newborn baby and how easy it is to love and accept yourself. Maybe there is a new baby in the family or neighborhood to help you see the beauty and innocence of a newborn.

Affirmation:

I deserve love and remember to love myself unconditionally.

8. Take Responsibility for Your Life

The theme of responsibility runs throughout this book. Consider you, as an adult, are the main character of your life, the director, and script writer. Only you have the power to create your life differently. High self-esteem requires full responsibility.

Accepting responsibility for your life begins a whole new way of living. It is solution oriented, not problem oriented; it is proactive and moves you out of being a victim into a creative, empowered human being. To gain the freedom to live and create your life the way you want, you have to make your own decisions. Only you have the
inner power to do this. Step up to the plate if you want to live the life you are capable of living.

No one is to blame for the problems, unhappiness, or low self-esteem that you are currently experiencing — not you, not your parents, not your partner, not your children, no one. In the beginning of opening the door to knowing and understanding yourself, it is important to look at your past and understand the effect it has had on you. Psychotherapy many times begins this way. Your childhood does affect you and it is helpful to look at the family of origin. It is common to blame parents for “mistakes” in childrearing and for being unaware or hurtful. Again, I emphasize it serves no purpose to blame your parents or anyone else. Remember that everyone is doing the best they are capable of doing with their level of awareness, and that includes your parents and their parents.

I am not saying to gloss over the pain and suffering you experienced. It is important to do grief work and learn to forgive and make peace with your parents. It can take a long time to understand how blame keeps you stuck, or you can get it today.

Going beyond shame and guilt requires you to make peace with every person in your life who has ever upset, betrayed, or victimized you. You do this through love and forgiveness. Some of you may need to spend much time in counseling sessions and writing in your journal. Making peace with the past is an inner experience. Other people may or may not be a part of the healing.

Genuine forgiveness is not pretending you are mature, looking down upon the person who has wronged you, and letting them “off the hook.” Instead, it is understanding how and why the other person could do what they did. You realize you forgive them because they really did not do anything to “you.” They were merely acting out their negative life dramas and unconscious beliefs, perceptions, and patterns. You happened to be the one in their path and were a target for their pain and suffering. If you were not there it would be someone else.

This is simple to explain intellectually and very difficult to practice emotionally. You may need to release a lot of anger and pain before getting to this place of forgiveness. It helps some people to talk to a friend or to a counselor. Others benefit from journal writing, meditating, or praying. When you hold on to grudges and blame, it poisons your space. When you forgive, it frees you.
The sad thing is when we see these negative patterns being continued in ourselves. We have to be vigilant to stay conscious of our thoughts, words, and actions and to daily practice self-inquiry, mindfulness, and do the inner work necessary to heal ourselves and stop the negative patterns from going any further.

If these ideas are new to you or difficult to understand, you may need to ponder them for a while before accepting them. These insights offered can change your guiding beliefs about yourself and about how life operates, greatly improving your emotional well-being. Remember that building sound self-esteem is a process and it takes time. It starts with your thinking and eventually you will receive it on the emotional level of your being.

**Affirmation:**

I take one step today in taking greater responsibility for my life.
Part IV: Guiding Beliefs

It is important to have a deeper understanding about the mind and the way it affects how you feel about yourself. You have a set of assumptions about life, human behavior, relationships, and yourself. Call these assumptions guiding beliefs, or rules by which you live your life. Many of these beliefs are unconscious and you do not remember ever having learned them. Yet, these beliefs guide your life and affect everything you do and feel because they are true for you. It is now time to become more aware of your beliefs so you can determine which ones are no longer serving you. These can be revised and updated by the empowered, self-determining person you are becoming today.

Many of your guiding beliefs are not higher psychological or spiritual truths, and yet, they strongly influence your life. As you uncover beliefs that limit you, and it is a life long process, you can do something about it, update them to higher truths. For example, you may believe that you are not good enough or attractive enough to find a loving partner. You may feel you are not smart enough to have a prosperous business. After all, you have proven this to be true to yourself. Right? Go to the mall or observe your friends. Take notice when you see others manifesting different results than you do. You will learn these people think differently. Allow them to show you possibilities for updating your belief system. Some of you read novels with fictional characters that can show you new options and help you reframe your thinking.

If you are having a problem with not feeling worthy and not loving yourself, it is necessary to bring your limiting beliefs to the forefront of your conscious awareness. These beliefs are creating your interpretation of the events in your life and the results you are living. Some beliefs may be false, yet, have been with you a long time. Many were accepted when you were two, three, four, or five years of age. Since the mind matures around the age of sixteen, many of your interpretations of life, for example, what your parents and other adults were really meaning with their words and actions, you can see how immature many of your beliefs must be. A child does not interpret patterns, habits, and words accurately. For example, if your parents
argued and said mean things to one another at times, you as a child 
might interpret that they were saying those mean things to you. The 
younger the child, the less separation there is from the adult’s 
emotional space. Separation from parents grows slowly from infancy 
to young adulthood. You internalized much of what your parents said 
to each other and took it personally because you were too young to 
understand the history of their relationship, their wounds, the lack of 
communication skills. You could not possibly understand the fact 
unaware people project their anger onto others and feel like victims. 
Unfortunately, you were at the mercy of your parent’s level of 
awareness as a child and you automatically absorbed their reality, the 
positive as well as the negative.

Looking at my own life, my mother always told me she loved 
me. She was abrasive and rude to my father, however. She had her 
reasons I now understand. As a child, though, I felt this incongruency 
and felt she was mad at me too. I made sure I was good so she would 
love me. I interpreted that love was based on conditions. As an aware 
adult I have much more understanding of their relationship. 
Intellectually understanding helps me heal the wounded child within 
me today that internalized their dysfunctional patterns.

The good news is that even if you were not taught positive 
beliefs that build sound self-esteem, you have the power today to redo 
beliefs that no longer support and serve you. Notice as you read the 
following section which of the ideas make you uncomfortable and 
cause you to react. These are the areas to consider changing. It is not 
important that you agree or disagree. Simply consider these ideas that 
may be influencing some of your beliefs. I can give you clues as to 
why you have blocked your ability to love yourself, however, it is 
important to go slowly as you move forward making changes. It is not 
wise to automatically take what I am offering without contemplation. 
Move forward at your own pace and incorporate new beliefs that only 
you determine are right for you at this time.

I have proven to myself that updating my beliefs makes my life 
work better and I feel better about myself because of it. It did take 
time, however, and I continue the process today. Whenever I am stuck, 
for example, find myself in a power struggle or feel angry or hurt, I 
spend time alone. Usually, I journal write to express my thoughts and 
feelings and eventually figure out what is blocking me.
Following are ten beliefs that many people have. Some of these may be part of your belief system. This list can help you get started. Over time you will identify some of your own false truths or beliefs. Your job is to explore outside your frame of reference to begin freeing yourself from other people’s limiting belief systems that have negatively affected you. Some may have prevented you from being who you are capable of being.

**Things You May Have Been Taught That Are False**

1. You cannot get what you want in life.

2. Expectations always enable you to get what you want.

3. Get your wants met before your needs.

4. You are a victim.

5. You have to go to church to have a good relationship with God.

6. You will feel good when you have the “right” job, mate, car, weight, etc.

7. Mistakes are bad.

8. It is better to give than to receive.

9. Everyone is equal and has equal opportunities.

10. A difficult childhood cripples you for life.

**1. You cannot get what you want in life. (False)**

Many of you learned that you are not worthy and will never be good or perfect enough to receive what you want in life. Since you do not question this false teaching, you do not ask for what you want. Maybe at a deep unconscious level you believe that you do not
deserve it. Yet, the opposite is true. Remember, you are worthy simply because you exist. You cannot earn your worthiness. You have to accept your worthiness. You can still let your needs and wants be known, even though you think you are not perfect and, therefore, not deserving. Close this book for a minute, close your eyes, and ask yourself what you would like to create, attract, or experience in your future.

The truth is that you can have whatever you truly desire, that is if you are willing to do what it takes to create it and accept it. What you are willing and able to accept is based on your attitudes and guiding beliefs about deserving. Therefore, if you have been taught that you cannot get what you want in life, whether it is happiness, respect, a loving relationship, a dynamic job you love using your talents, etc., begin a correction at the guiding-belief level. Start with allowing yourself to accept that you can have what you ask for. At the very least, consider the possibility of receiving what you desire. Some people are manifesting the things they desire and you deserve to be one of them.

When I become conscious of something I want to experience, express, own, or become, I first let it be a possibility. Sometimes I talk myself out of it by stating why I can’t have it or don’t deserve it. Then, I begin talking back to this voice. I ask myself why I want this and how my life will be different. Is it worth working or striving for? Can I see in my mind that I will enjoy it in the future? Is it possible I would be burdened by it?

Once I’ve determined I want something and would receive value from creating it, I begin talking to myself again. For example, when I went to graduate school, I heard people say, “Don’t go into counseling, the field is flooded. It’s so competitive. You can’t get a decent job without a doctoral degree.” But when I decided a counseling career was a possibility and I wanted it, I said things to myself such as, “Even if there is a shortage of jobs, I may as well be one of the counselors who finds one. If anyone can find a job with just a master’s degree, I will.” It is important to know yourself and what your needs are. Begin getting your true needs met and then move towards creating what you want. Consider going deeper than material needs and wants.
One important part of manifesting what you want is you must feel it very strongly. If you do not get that bodily sensation it is hard to create something.

2. Expectations always enable you to get what you want. (False)

Unrealistic expectations set you up for disappointment. This may sound like a contradiction with what was just said; however, realize that you can go to the opposite extreme and demand too much. Living from either extreme blocks you. You must always ask for what you want; however, let go of the outcome so that you do not force a specific conclusion. For example, you may be working on prosperity consciousness and find that results do not manifest as you expected. There is a clue here that you are inwardly blocking yourself with your guiding beliefs again. You may secretly believe that you are unworthy and, therefore, undeserving. It is helpful to look at what is realistic at this time and make the adjustment. Ask for what you want and let it happen the way it will. Do not assume that you know the best way. It can be a mental trap to force a result before you have removed the blocks that prevent you from being able to achieve what you say you want.

Be honest with yourself regarding what the current reality is and how you would be able to accept what you say you desire. If you want to be a millionaire, hold that vision and at the same time notice where your finances are currently. Maybe being debt free is a short term goal on the journey to being financially sound. You could even be limiting yourself by putting a million dollars as the goal. To create you have to be realistic according to your own life. It is important to know the reality of the moment and be willing to take the risks necessary to move into the future self you are creating.

Unrealistic expectations of others set you up for disappointments. It can negatively impact others, especially if they have an external locus of control. An example is using guilt or withholding love or attention to punish, trying to force a particular response or action from another. When you allow others to live and create their own lives, you will find sometimes that what you expect
and what the other person can or is willing to do does not always match up. Again, be realistic.

When in a relationship and you find that you have expectations, and we all do, then communicate to the other person what you need and want. Ask, then let go of whether the other person can meet your expectations. Sometimes they can and sometimes they cannot. It is necessary to listen to what their needs and desires are, as well as their expectations. This opens communication. The bottom line is that you must learn to accept the reality of the situation. Some things cannot be changed just by expecting the change. When you have needs and wants dependent on another, you are co-creating this reality with that person. If I want to create something in my life that only involves me, like a more fit body or a new job, I call the shots and take full responsibility. However, when what I want involves another person, I must share the responsibility for creating, which requires taking the other person’s reality (needs, wants, perceptions, or goals) into consideration.

3. Get your wants met before your needs. (False)

In our society there is heavy emphasis on material measures of happiness. Often you are trapped into achieving or trying to get some object when what you really want is to be nurtured emotionally or spiritually. Rather than a new dress or a new car or eating sweets, what you may need is attention. You may just need someone to care about you, to listen to you, and to enjoy you. Or you may need direction in life in order to feel a sense of purpose. Your needs must be met before you can feel good. The next time you are driven to eat when you are not hungry or buy something on impulse, stop and ask yourself what you really need.

It is important to get in touch with your true needs. You then can take responsibility for meeting them. Taking risks is in order. If, for example, you are lonely or need people to talk to and to care about you, it would be helpful to be more social. Consider joining a group. Possibilities include attending church and joining in their activities, taking classes, or volunteering. Or, maybe you are at the other end of the continuum and would benefit from dropping some of your activities and setting aside time for meditation and inner work. Either
way you must take the time to discover what you truly need in your life.

4. You are a victim. (False)

If you have not learned you are powerful and are creating your life, then you may believe that things just happen to you randomly. You may feel there is nothing you can do to change negative situations in your life. You are a victim. This is how much of the world thinks.

I encourage you to take an honest look at how you are reliving your childhood patterns that your parents modeled to you. When you were little, you did not have the power that you do today as an adult. When you were dependent and helpless you couldn’t take care of yourself, or leave, or get help. You are grown up now and you can make choices to support yourself. If you know this and cannot put into practice what is healthy and right for you, then give yourself a gift. Get professional help.

5. You have to go to church to have a good relationship with God. (False)

Actually, this is one of many beliefs you may have learned from good-intentioned religious teachings. It can be very fearful for some of you to question religious beliefs. You may have experienced a period of guilt if you separated from early religious teachings in your life. The higher the degree of autonomy that your early upbringing encouraged, which gave you permission to question and explore, the lower the degree of guilt you will feel when exploring outside of your early experiences.

You formed many of your beliefs and opinions about God by how you were treated by the authority figures in your life, mainly your parents. As an adult it may be time to explore the difference between spirituality and religion.

It is of primary importance to develop a personal relationship with God, the Universe, the Source, or Universal Mind, whatever term you prefer to use, on the journey to finding your true Self. This needs to take place regardless of your beliefs about God or religion. To know that there is a power greater than yourself is mandatory if you are to
truly feel good about yourself, because your true power to heal and transform involves knowing you are a needed, important part of Life. This power exists all the time and does not depend upon a church or its dogma. Religious institutions and their rules were designed to serve and lead people who needed or wanted help to know and connect with God. If you feel you must be in a church or in a certain religion in order to experience this power, and if you are unfilled spiritually, then I urge you to explore, question, and experience other aspects of life. For example, explore different religions, learn to meditate, go on a spiritual retreat, spend time in nature, and spend time alone each day pondering life.

*A relationship with God exists whether you are conscious of it or not.* It exists twenty-four hours a day, inside or outside of a church or system of teaching about God. The goal is to develop a personal relationship with God.

6. **You will feel good when you have the “right” job, mate, car, weight, etc. (False)**

You are in the perfect place, this moment, to learn your greatest lessons. Yes, you have the power to create a better job or find a more compatible partner; however, remember that right now is where you are. Life is a journey and we never get “THERE” because there is always a new place in which to grow. *We create tomorrow by what we focus on today.* Since it is today, you must wake up and remind yourself you are okay just the way you are. You can continue the talk by saying things to yourself such as, “I will take care of myself today. I choose to nurture myself, pay attention to my feelings, and take a positive risk to get my life going in a new direction.” A job or partner or new car does not make you feel good for long because you still have to live with yourself.

*Your power is in today. Love yourself right now, live with an attitude of gratitude for what you have and you will begin to feel better regardless of the circumstances.* Prepare to create, at your own pace, a fantastic future self!

7. **Mistakes are bad. (False)**
You are in the school of life and are learning lessons daily that move you on course toward your life’s purpose and goals. Mistakes happen because you do not know or understand something and are unable, at that moment, to do anything else. When you find that you are repeating a pattern and making the same mistake over and over, it is not that you are weak or bad, it simply means that you are unaware of something. The discomfort of the repeated experience will eventually give you the impetus to gather information, to try something different, and finally to become conscious of more parts of yourself.

Treating mistakes as opportunities to become more conscious is a more constructive place to live than continually criticizing and blaming yourself. You can love yourself even as you make a mistake. Forgive yourself for not being aware of all aspects of a situation.

8. It is better to give than to receive. (False)

This spiritual teaching was for people who were takers and unable to give. Giving and receiving are flip sides of the same coin. Some of you need to learn to receive without feeling guilty and some of you need to learn to give.

True unconditional giving, with no strings attached, requires you to give from a place of being filled up emotionally and giving from the overflow. You can receive this nurturing from Spirit if not from another person. Some people are emotionally nurtured by nature or animals.

What would the world be like if everyone could only give? There would be no one to receive. Remember to balance your giving and receiving as they are two parts of one whole.

9. Everyone is equal and has equal opportunities. (False)

The essence of each human being is equally precious. The Universe needs each and every person to make the greater whole complete. However, each person is different. You do not have the same genes, early environment, life experiences, or level of awareness
as anyone else. Therefore, it would be impossible to have any two people equal. This has been interpreted as negative by some; however, it is simply a fact of life. You make life easier for yourself when you know and accept your capabilities, talents, interests, aptitudes, strengths, weaknesses, and potentials. You also make life easier when you make wise and realistic choices and put yourself in situations that are fair and advantageous for you.

Look at your life and see if there are some areas that do not feel right and are putting you under stress. You may be acting under the false impression that every opportunity is good for you and that you should take all of them. On the other hand, if your life feels good and you do not wish to accept an opportunity to do something else, consider staying where you are as an acceptable choice.

10. A difficult childhood cripples you for life. (False)

Unwise parents and a negative childhood may cripple your life for a time; however, blaming parents, who were themselves the products of a painful childhood, helps no one. You can break out of early negative patterns; you do not have to remain handicapped forever. Limitations can force us to grow in compassion and understanding. Remember to have compassion for yourself first. Again, professional help may be needed. Read, journal write, spend time observing, and do your inner work to change. Forgiveness is an important part of making peace with your parents and childhood. One of my favorite books on the subject is, *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, by John W. James and Russell Friedman.
Things You May Not Have Been Taught That Are True

1. You are worthy and deserving of love.

2. It is good to love yourself.

3. It is okay to make mistakes and not be perfect.

4. Feelings are good.

5. Use your talents.

6. All behavior makes sense.

7. People are your mirrors.

8. You create your own life and you are responsible for yourself.

List some of your own.

1. **You are worthy and deserving of love.**

   You may have been taught that you are unworthy and that you have to earn your worthiness. Even some religious teachings reinforce this state of conditional love. If your home, community, or church taught you that you do not count and that you are unlovable until proven lovable, this concept may be difficult for you to accept. Know that there are religions and people in the world today who teach the opposite. Remember, you are innately good and worthy of love. To reach this realization within yourself, it may be helpful to study and contemplate the teachings of other philosophies and religions. You
may need to meet someone who loves you unconditionally, a friend, teacher, or counselor. Others who are able to love themselves can reflect unconditional love to you. This helps you open to your innate worthiness when you are unable to do it for yourself. Eventually you will believe and feel from within, that you are good simply because you are a part of All of Life. Simply because you exist, you are worthy and good.

If you still have difficulty, imagine yourself as a baby and visualize the innocence of yourself at birth and how easy it is to unconditionally love yourself at this point in time. Maybe there is a new child in your family or neighborhood to help you remember your own innate goodness.

2. It is good to love yourself.

You are not selfish and conceited if you love yourself. You deserve love simply because you exist. When you accept and love yourself you have the inner resources and strength to handle everything that life presents to you. You come from a place of being grounded and being filled up rather than from a place of weakness, emptiness, and neediness. You are able to give to others instead of hoping and expecting others to fill you up with love and being disappointed when they are unable to give to you. You can give only what you have. As you love yourself more and more, you will find that your close relationships become more balanced in giving and receiving.

3. It is okay to make mistakes and not be perfect.

Some people believe they have done some irresponsible things in the past, so bad, that there is no way to be forgiven or to be worthy of love and happiness. They find ways to keep punishing themselves with judgments that keep them separated from their good, their true nature, from God. Remorse is a good quality to have when we have done something unwise. Toxic shame, blame, and guilt are unhealthy and keep us stuck. Remember forgiveness is the only way out of this dilemma.
If you were perfect, you would not need to be here. Consider this is the school of life. When you learn from and correct your mistakes, you learn. I like the definition of perfection given by Ken Carey in his book, Vision. According to Carey, “Perfection is not never making a mistake; perfection is never consciously making a mistake.” So work towards the goal of mastery or perfection, learning along the way to live from your highest intentions and values day by day. Remember when we keep repeating negative patterns, habits, and behaviors when we know better, there are deeper things to explore within yourself. Inner work is then in order and professional help makes it easier to get past these impasses.

4. Feelings are good.

Each thought has a feeling associated with it; they go together. Many people have not been trained to think about what they are feeling or to feel what they are thinking. Identifying your feelings is a new language to many. Feelings are your inner guidance system. They communicate what is going on within, many times at the unconscious level. Feelings give you personal feedback about your interactions with people and experiences.

One way to realize you have a feeling is to notice your body sensations. For example, if your shoulders are tense and your stomach is upset you may be feeling fearful. Maybe you are feeling fearful of expressing yourself, facing a new situation, or the probable reactions of a loved one. You have to learn to crack the code of your own body awareness system, as it speaks in metaphor. Many times it is necessary to spend time alone to ponder exactly what you are feeling and to identify the thoughts and beliefs associated with each. You can also consider which are rational and fit the current situation and which are irrational thoughts and feelings based on memories of the past. The latter requires some updating in order to live in present time.

Emotions such as anger and depression are not wrong or bad, they simply are. You can use anger, jealousy, or depression to feel bad or you can see them as feedback from within that something is not right and needs your attention. This feedback from your inner guidance system alerts you to issues, beliefs, and situations that need to be healed, confronted, or changed. Use feelings to help you go
within to understand your problems. Intense emotions, such as anger, generate energy that positively directed can be used to make changes in your life.

Anger and depression many times are secondary emotions. They hide deeper feelings and emotions below the surface of your awareness. These feelings can include fear of failure, fear of not being perfect, confusion, insecurity, loss of control, feeling violated or abused, or fear of abandonment, to name a few.

Learn to always tell yourself the truth about what you are feeling. Your inner guidance system wants to take care of you. Listen.

5. Use your talents.

Developing, enjoying, and sharing your talents makes you feel good about yourself. I’m using the word “talent” loosely here. It can mean ease and ability to listen to others or to work with animals or to care for plants. It feels good to share your talents. If the people now in your life do not accept or need what you have to give, there are many others who do. Volunteering is a way to practice using your gifts and talents and is really not work at all, because you receive as much as you give. Think about what you love to do, then practice the skills by volunteering. At some point, you might choose to develop your talents into a job where you get paid for what you love to do.

One of my talents is watercolor painting. I like to give my paintings to others. It brings me such joy to watch someone choose a painting and enjoy it. We both win.

6. All behaviors make sense.

If you do not like your behavior or another’s, it is helpful to look behind the actions to see what is motivating you or the other person to act this way. Your needs motivate you. When you are surprised or disappointed at your own behavior, sometimes it is because you have competing needs. The dominant need usually wins. You may be unaware of your needs or have brushed them aside and ignored them for a long time. As you become conscious of suppressed needs that are demanding expression, it is important to find ways to
meet your needs in a healthy way. Then you will be less surprised by unexpected behaviors and reactions.

Begin by seeking insight into your needs, not focusing on your behaviors. This requires inner time and is much better than being stuck blaming yourself over and over for unwanted behavior. Journal writing helps me when I am unaware of a part of myself; I simply begin writing and see what comes out. The more aware you become of your real needs, the easier it is to understand and to change your unwanted behaviors. You have to let go of superficial needs that have gotten you off track in life.

All behavior makes sense when you find out what needs are motivating you. When you identify the real needs, you have more power to achieve the things you say you want. You then make positive choices about how to get those needs met. Eventually you are pleasantly surprised that the negative behaviors fade. Again, it is necessary to see your behavior as separate from the essence of you, a person growing in awareness.

7. People are your mirrors.

If you like or dislike another person’s behavior, attitudes, beliefs, traits, etc., it may be because they reflect a part of you that you probably hide from yourself. Another name for mirroring is projection, a psychological defense mechanism where we defend ourselves from ourselves. We have an image of ourselves and are uncomfortable with traits, habits, attitudes, and beliefs that do not fit into this image. It then shows up as things we are uncomfortable with or dislike in others.

Projections can be positive, as well as negative things we disown. How do they get started? At sometime in our lives, we made decisions or judgments that certain behaviors, feelings, and attitudes were not okay to have. We then denied and suppressed that part of ourselves to avoid facing and dealing with it. Usually, it is the negative or “bad” labels that can be real eye openers to discover lurk in our unconscious side. We all have disowned parts of ourselves; the psychologist Carl Jung called this, “the Shadow.” If you choose to become a more aware person, then it is important to take the time to
discover more about your shadow side. It helps us to have fewer surprise reactions to others.

Every time I catch myself being judgmental or have a quick flash of strong emotion towards someone, I know I have something to learn about myself. When I do not like someone’s behavior, attitudes, etc., I set aside some alone time to ask myself many questions. “What am I feeling about this person? What exactly do I dislike or am uncomfortable with? Who does this person remind me of in the past who had this trait? What am I expecting this person to say or do that they are not doing? Why do I care? Do I secretly wish I were able to express this? Is there any place in my life where I could be similar to this person, even in a small way? Where have I unconsciously been doing it somewhere in my life? How does this fit into any of my patterns? What do I need that I am not getting that this person is now bringing to my conscious awareness?”

This also works in a positive direction. When you like another person, it is because that person reflects something you like in yourself, or something you want to develop in yourself. You do not see anything in another person unless you two have something in common. What you see is a part of you or a potential within you. People with traits, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors that do not match up with you, simply go unnoticed and there is no connection or desire to get involved with that person. You have nothing in common.

One example from my life where I was unable to own a part of myself, yet saw my potential in another, was when I took a self-discovery class many years ago. I noticed I felt irritated when the teacher answered questions other students had in the class. I thought I could respond and give better answers to some of their questions. Eventually, I used this experience to get in touch with the fact I was a teacher and wanted to develop the confidence to teach self-awareness classes. I eventually taught many, Building Self-Esteem Classes and felt very fulfilled inside once I took the risk to get started.

As you learn to accept yourself, you will grow to accept all people regardless of their beliefs, habits, and behavior. This does not imply that you have to be around those people you do not like. You simply learn from them and work on yourself, not them.

I believe it is very important to spend time with people who reflect love, acceptance, support, interest, and caring. If you notice you do not have supportive people in your life then you may have to take
some risks to build new relationships. Consider taking a class or workshop, joining a church group or yoga class, or volunteer to meet people.

For further information about projection and the shadow and how to work with your awareness, read Debbie Ford’s book, *The Dark Side of The Light Chasers: Reclaiming Your Power, Creativity, Brilliance, and Dreams.*

**8. You create your own life and you are responsible for yourself.**

Energy follows thought. When you focus your thoughts, you put energy into creating those thoughts. The stronger the intensity you feel the desire for those thoughts and images in your mind, the more powerful your creations. They can be negative or positive. Sometimes we create in our minds and then sabotage it with fear and doubt. What you fear you create, as well as positive goals you set forth. In both cases you spend time thinking about them, feeling them deeply, and they manifest.

The good news is that now you can take more charge of what you create. You can use your mind in a more positive way. If you have pushed away your good with fear and doubt at the unconscious level, you can do it differently now because you are a free, thinking adult.

It is time to take responsibility for creating your own life, to live your own purpose, and fulfill your own needs. When you do this, you build your self-esteem.

One simplified way of looking at your life is to see it in three stages. The first stage involves living with your parents and family system. Stage two is moving through the challenges and being your own person, while stage three is a place of high self-esteem, deep peace, and acceptance for yourself and all others. These stages overlap and are not definite, clear cut periods of time.

Stage one includes all of your life experiences and relationships from birth to around age eighteen or twenty. The circumstances of these early years set up a matrix of patterns which gave you beliefs, traits, and behaviors.

The opportunity in stage two is to separate from your parents, to grow in self-awareness and empowerment, and to modify what is not working for you. Here, you can choose to heal your conflicts and solve your problems. Many of your problems, issues, and conflicts have been handed down to you from generation to generation in areas such
as parenting, self-esteem, religion, alcoholism, chronic depression, communication in relationships, love, etc.

Many people never make changes, grow, heal, or gain insights. They may never move beyond stage two; they simply pass their patterns on to their children. This book is designed to motivate you to gain awareness and work through limiting patterns in stage two of your life. Stage two really begins, not at a certain age, but at a place of awareness. It begins when you want to change, grow, and transform. You desire to face life realistically and want to heal your issues, conflicts, and traumas. You learn to move out of being a victim of early circumstances and repeated patterns. Difficult early experiences need not prevent you from reaching stage three in your life. When you look at making peace with your childhood and resolving your conflicts, you no longer resist what is fact and move forward, seeing your parents and your early experiences as opportunities for growth.

Stage three is about truly knowing, loving, and accepting yourself and all others. This is a peaceful stage of life, living with awareness. If you want to know more about living at this third stage, I recommend Eckhard Tolle’s book, *A New Earth, Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*.

The three stages are not exact, they blend and sometimes you work on stage two and three at the same time. As an adult, you can now take responsibility for creating consciously and healing yourself. You have the ability to view the past with mature insights. In this way you interpret your past and, thus, change its influence over you today.

To create clearly and consciously, it is helpful to continue looking at your guiding beliefs to uncover those that no longer serve you. Identify those beliefs keeping you from getting what you want. Over time you will grow in autonomy and be in charge of your own life. In this way, you slowly free yourself from other people’s belief systems which prevent you from being who you are capable of being, your true Self.

Before leaving this section on creating your life, I think it important to address an unwritten law. It says to use this mind power only for yourself. It is not to be used to create for other people, no matter how good your intentions. However, you can align yourself with what another person is creating for themselves, adding your power of thought, word, actions, or prayers to help him or her. It is actually possible to delay another person’s growth by attempting to
fix, change, improve, or to take away pain. In other words, each person is responsible for his or her own life. The best way to help another is to work on yourself because you have an effect on those around you. The higher your self-care, self-respect, and self-esteem the more positive your influence is on others.

**Updating Limiting Guiding Beliefs**

In this section we will learn how to take beliefs guiding our lives in a negative way and update them. Many people have an overriding belief that says, “I am unworthy.” The first step in erasing such a belief from your consciousness is to change it. Turn it around into healing affirmations, such as:

I am worthy because I am alive; I do not have to earn my worthiness.

I care about myself.

I accept myself regardless of what other people think or feel about me.

I feel loving toward myself.

The corrected, updated beliefs are perfect to use as affirmations, positive statements to say to yourself. Affirmations override negative self-talk and over time become part of your thinking. Say your updated affirmations to yourself, often, out loud if possible, until they feel true for you. It may be helpful to write them on 3 x 5 cards and place them around the house, too.

Now, it is time to specifically work on your guiding beliefs. Get some paper and a pen. Allow this section to trigger your thinking. As you read, write down your beliefs as you become aware of them. It is okay to start with the ones presented here. There are, however, thousands of them in your mind, that over time you will slowly identify. Your job is to update old, unhealthy, limiting beliefs with new healthier ones as you discover them.

**Examples of Limiting Beliefs and Updated Beliefs**
Beliefs About Security:

L: I feel insecure when another person disagrees with me.
U: I am a worthwhile person regardless of whether or not we agree.
   My security comes from within, not from the approval by others.

Beliefs About Money:

L: To make money, I must give up free time.
U: I make money and I still have free time.

L: I am not willing to work long hours; therefore, I cannot have much money.
U: I make money, by using my time in creative ways. I have fun making money.
L: I am spiritually oriented; therefore, I cannot make a lot of money.
U: Money is not a sign of being spiritual or unspiritual. I have money and am spiritual at the same time.

L: People with a lot of money are selfish.
U: Selfish people are found with and without money.

Beliefs About Time:

L: I do not have time to do what I want.
U: I make choices with my time so that I include doing things that please me.

L: I am always late.
U: I now work well with time. I like to be early for appointments.

Beliefs About Perfection:

L: I have to be perfect.
U: I am perfect right now just the way I am, even as I grow and change.
L: If I do not come in first, I am inferior and feel humiliated.
U: I am a perfect expression of myself and play my best, whether I win or loose.

L: No one really likes me because I am “out of step” with others.
U: My special qualities attract the right people to me, and I release expecting everyone to like me.

L: No one will really love me because I am different from others.
U: My special qualities attract the love to me that I need. I like being me.

Beliefs About My Body:

L: No one will really care about me because I am no longer slender or young and attractive.
U: I love myself just the way I am, in body, weight, age, and life experience. I let go of society’s unhealthy images for me.

Beliefs About Men:

L: Men are run by their egos and hormones.
U: Men are perfect right now just the way they are. I find the men who are thoughtful and caring.

L: Men are inferior to women.
U: Men and women are different; each are human beings on life’s journey.

Beliefs About Women:

L: Women are airheads, emotional, and unable to work hard.
U: Women can be creative and emotional, as well as logical and hardworking.

L: Only women know how to take care of young children because
they are naturally nurturing.
U: Men can be nurturing and take good care of young children if they so choose.

L: Women are inferior to men.
U: Women and men both have good qualities. Gender does not determine worthiness.

**Beliefs About Criticism:**

L: I feel angry and threatened when I am criticized.
U: When people criticize me, they are doing their best to offer an opinion. I let go of having to believe every opinion I hear.

L: I feel bad and shamefult when people criticize me.
U: I am good regardless of whether others find my traits and behaviors positive or negative.

**Beliefs About Work:**

L: I never can catch up with my work at my job.

U: I do my job perfectly in the time allotted me. I continually learn time management techniques to improve my efficiency.

L: Work is more important than play.
U: I balance work and play because they are both very important.

**Beliefs About Agreement:**

L: I feel insecure when others disagree with me.
U: I stop letting others’ agreement with me determine my worthiness.

L: I feel unworthy when others disagree with me.
U: I am worthy and do not need others’ agreement to feel good.

**Beliefs About Being Right:**
L: To feel safe, I have to know I am right.
U: I let go of being right. I listen to others’ opinions. We can disagree and still be friends.

L: I spend a lot of time proving I am right rather than being right.
U: I choose inner peace and let go of proving I am right.

Beliefs About Rejection:

L: My fear of rejection determines what I say and do.
U: I say and do what is right for me. If you reject me, that is your choice.

L: I feel insecure when loved ones are emotionally distant.
U: I am strong within and accept emotional distancing when a loved one is upset and in pain.

Beliefs About Wants:

L: I can only have what I need and not what I want.
U: I have what I need so I can create what I want.

L: I am selfish if I want more.
U: I create from what I am, which is neither selfish or unselfish.

Beliefs About Value:

L: What I say is not important.
U: I express my opinions and thoughts because I am as important as everyone else.

L: I am not important.
U: My life makes a difference.

Beliefs About Selfishness:
L: I am uncaring and selfish if I put my needs first.
U: I am a caring, responsive, and giving person. Sometimes I choose to put myself first.

L: I don’t have enough time for me.
U: I am learning how to identify my needs and nurture myself.

**Beliefs About Public Self:**

L: I can’t speak before groups. I’m shy.
U: I can speak to groups because I have much to say. It does not matter if I am shy.

**Beliefs About Self Love:**

L: No one really cares for me. I’m unlovable.
U: I release myself from others’ projections. I’m lovable and receive unconditional love from my Higher Power.

**Beliefs About Codependency:**

L: I must control what you do and solve your problems for me to feel safe.
U: I release needing to be needed and allow you to solve your own problems.

**Beliefs About Partners:**

L: I will be happy when the prince (princess) rescues me; then I will have found the perfect partner.
U: I am happy today learning to be exactly my true Self. I look within to feel happy. The partner I am with is perfect for me today.

**Beliefs About Parenting:**
L: I am a good mother/father when my children get good grades and have high achievements. If they don’t, I have failed as a parent.

Beliefs About Forgiveness:

L: I will never forgive my parents for hurting me when I was young.
U: I ask my higher Self or God to forgive my parents through me. I now know they were unaware and also victims of abuse.

L: I can’t let things go when I remember hurtful actions of others.
U: Forgiving does not mean I accept what another has done. I choose to release myself from keeping the pain going.
Part V: Ways to Make Positive Changes

Many of the things mentioned throughout the book are discussed here in more detail. This section will review many of the ideas presented and add a few new ideas to help you put the information to use in your life. Much of the information overlaps between topics.

Intellectually understanding concepts and ideas that can improve your life doesn’t ensure positive changes in how you feel or behave. You have to put these ideas into practice and make them yours. Change does start with awareness, however, you also need ways to anchor the new information within you.

Following are many ways to empower you to put into practice the information in this book:

1. Change negative self-talk
2. Creative visualization.
3. Create a support system
4. Update guiding beliefs
5. Journal writing
6. Practice self-care
7. Grow spiritually
8. Say positive affirmations

1. Change your negative self-talk

You have a voice inside your mind that comments continually about everything you think, do, and say. This voice is critical and negative much of the time. To build self-esteem, it is necessary to change the negative, critical self-talk to a kind, loving voice inside your mind.
To build good feelings about yourself, it is important to become your own best friend. Talk to yourself as you would a dear friend or family member by saying kind, loving, supportive, problem-solving things to yourself.

**Exercise:**

Look back at the past week. What negative feeling memories do you have? Choose one. Review the situation in your mind and remember the things you said to yourself. For example, perhaps you were impatient with your children, maybe you yelled and lost your temper. Afterwards, your self-talk said, “You dummy, you didn’t do it right, AGAIN! You are a bad mother. You’ll never get it right. You are so stupid. I hate you for dumping your emotional garbage on your kids.”

This negative self-talk lowers your self-esteem. To break out of repeating a negative habit such as yelling at your children, you need to break the cycle of inner abuse. Instead of beating yourself up in your mind, it is much more productive to build yourself up by saying kind, supportive, and problem-solving things to yourself.

A better way to talk to yourself might be, “I am working to change my behavior. I am doing better than I was last year. I love my children and I will talk to them and express why I got so upset. I will remind them I love them even when I do not like their behavior. I will journal-write about my feelings and write some affirmations.”

Get in the habit of listening to your self-talk. Talk back to it with your new beliefs and you will begin feeling better about yourself. Speed up the process by saying and writing positive affirmations to yourself as you start each day. For example, say, “I like myself and am a worthwhile person, I forgive myself for not knowing/being/ doing…, I deserve love, inner peace, and fulfillment.” Consider tape recording them and playing it each morning to override your negative beliefs which create your self-talk. Hearing your own voice is very power for inner healing. The last section of this book is full of affirmations you can use.

2. *Creative Visualizations*
Add power to the things you want in life. Use visualization for creating all positive changes, from confidence and inner peace, to finding a job or life partner.

Visualizations are pictures that you see in your mind. Some people see clear visual pictures when they close their eyes and some do not. Some people are inclined to be more auditory (sense through hearing), and others are more kinesthetic (sense in terms of feeling).

Those of you who are not visual can still visualize by closing your eyes and sensing what you are creating in your mind. Practice a minute. Close your eyes and sense the difference between your car and your neighbor’s car or between an apple and a pear. The impression in your mind is visualization, whether you see the cars or fruit clearly or not.

Consciously working with visualizations is similar to working with affirmations. You are creating your future by the conscious images you see in your mind today. Why not become aware of them and have them create positive realities for you!

If, for example, you want to feel confident giving a presentation at work, picture in your mind yourself breathing deeply, smiling, and feeling relaxed as you stand in front of your boss. The deeper you can feel your mind picture the easier it actualizes in real life. Build your good feelings by seeing and feeling positive mind pictures. Each of the statements in the Self-Esteem Awareness Inventory in Part I, the updated beliefs in Part IV, and the affirmations presented at the end of the book are excellent seed thoughts to use for visualizations.

While you say one of the affirmations, close your eyes and imagine what it would look like and feel like if it were already true. This is a part of a lifestyle change. You make your beliefs and affirmations more powerful by putting your mind behind your words in order to create what you want. Use visualization to create anything you want to experience in your future, to break out of old patterns, to change how you relate to other people, to attract a relationship, or to build your self-confidence.

For more information read, *Creative Visualization: Use the Power of Your Imagination to Create What You Want in Your Life*, by Shakti Gawain. She has a workbook too.

### 3. Create a Support System
It is difficult to transform alone. Whether you realize it or not, having one other person to listen to you without judgment is very helpful in healing.

You deserve to have a least one person that supports your self-discovery path and who is also working on him or herself. Consider joining a group to begin meeting new people. Some of you may benefit from group counseling, while others may benefit from joining a group, such as a Twelve Step group, church group, or study group. Having others to call upon when you lose your courage to make positive changes is one of the best gifts you can give yourself. You open yourself to emotional support when you open to others and allow your vulnerability to surface.

A good way to start is by taking a self-awareness class; these are often offered in continuing education programs at hospitals, colleges, and community recreation centers.

4. Update limiting guiding beliefs

Your beliefs are rules that guide your life, frequently at a deep, unconscious level. Most guiding beliefs were copied from parents, older siblings, teachers, religions teachings, and the social norms during the time you grew up. Many were adopted when you had the mind of a child and are not accurate, yet they operate as your truth. Whatever you believe to be true, sets your life in motion, even if some of the beliefs are false and not serving you any more.

Following are several examples of Limiting beliefs that lower self-esteem and examples of possible ways to update them:

A. I never voice my opinion because it might make someone angry.

   **Update:** I value my own opinions and express my point of view when I choose; I am strong enough to deal with others’ reactions.

B. I must have love and approval from peers, family, and friends to feel okay.
**Update:** I value myself and let go of whether or not others are able to love and approve of me.

C. I must be totally competent and almost perfect in all that I undertake. Mistakes are shameful and to be avoided or hidden at all costs.

**Update:** I do my best, admit and correct my mistakes, and learn from them.

D. I am a victim of my past (childhood, traumatic events) and I can’t help that I simply react as events trigger my emotions.

**Update:** I grow daily in my ability to respond rather than react. I am continually making peace with my past.

5. **Keep a journal**

Journal writing is a unique way to get in touch with who you are, your thoughts, and your feelings. It is a good way to look at your issues, solve your problems, lower your stress level, and balance yourself emotionally. By writing about the things inside, inner healing takes place. It eases the discomfort of containing them. Writing about hurtful events from the past helps you make sense of the pain and suffering that has been affecting you emotionally, many times at the unconscious level. Journaling allows you to view these events with the clarity of an aware, open mind and it helps you integrate them into your total being. As you write your reactions to people and events, you discover your patterns, thoughts, and feelings.

Writing helps you clarify your thoughts, feelings, needs, wants, visions, values, wishes, and to set priorities. Communicating with others improves, because it helps you get centered and clear with yourself first. Once you know what you want and what you are feeling and thinking, you can express yourself more easily. Writing is a powerful way to help you begin transforming your life. It is surprising to see insights and wisdom flow onto the paper that under normal circumstances might be hidden from you.
If you have never done journal writing before, try it for a month before you judge this method of self-healing. No one will check your grammar or spelling. This is only for you. It may motivate you to use different colored ink pens, even calligraphy pens. You don’t even have to write in full sentences. A journal is not a sequential reporting of events, it is to make sense only to you. Hide your journal where you know it will be safe. If you write something and you fear it will be read by another, send it to a friend for safe keeping or even rip it up once you’ve expressed yourself.

Write for about twenty or thirty minutes at a time. Aim for five times a week. It helps if it is at the same time of day; but, by all means, journal even if you are not a schedule-type person. Here are some topics to get you started:

1. List things you are proud of about yourself and things you like about yourself.

2. Who were the people and situations that influenced your self-esteem, both positively and negatively in your past?

3. Write letters to anyone you feel angry or unforgiving toward. You do not have to mail the letters. In fact, it might be unwise to mail such a letter if you are feeling insecure or fearful. Wait until you have gained some self-confidence, and then decide whether or not to mail it or give it to the other person. It is okay to rewrite letters that you do send.

4. Discuss three of your goals and the steps you see necessary to achieve them.

5. What are the major themes in your life? What lessons have you learned so far?

6. Write a list of your needs, wants, desires, goals, and values and discuss them.

7. Record your dreams. Include how you feel about each dream and what you think it may mean. Look for themes and patterns in your dreams over a period of time.
8. Write what you want to create and experience in life.

9. List your blocks — the things that seem to keep you from getting what you want and keep you from experiencing a sense of happiness and well-being.

10. List your fears. Write about your most negative thought about yourself? What can you do about this after reading this book?

11. Write your autobiography. In what ways can you see your past positively impacting your future?

12. Write letter or a poem of forgiveness to someone in your life.

13. Name one change you want to complete after reading this book. How will these changes affect others around you? How will you handle this?

14. Write about what you learned about love from your mother. from your father. How is that affecting you today? What patterns are you repeating? What new choices are you willing to make in your adult life?

15. Write yourself a letter at the beginning of each year or on your birthday, expressing all that you want to experience and accomplish in the next year. Open your letter the following year to see how well you stayed on track. Notice whether you had unrealistic expectations and expected too much of yourself or the opposite and held back. Make corrections when you write your next year’s letter with more realistic time frames.

6. Practice Self-Care

On the journey to learning to love and respect yourself, it is important to take care of yourself. The bottom line includes a daily routine of getting proper rest, eating healthy food, and movement that suits your personality. Add to this taking good care of your body, your
teeth, hair, and skin. It is nourishing to choose colors that you like for your clothing and home furnishings.

Take contemplation time daily to check in with yourself. Quality time alone allows you to think, journal write, pray, meditate, daydream, or listen to your intuition.

Another tip is to develop your interests, share your talents, or do something creative. It feels good to express your gifts and share them with others.

One way to care for yourself is to take care of yourself on all levels, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It is best to not turn the care of yourself over to another. Enjoy the times you share with others and the times others are able to nurture you or meet your needs; watch the tendency, however, to set yourself up for disappointment with expectations. The following are some ways to nurture yourself:

**Physical Ways**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take a walk</th>
<th>Ride a bike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise at a gym</td>
<td>Practice yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a bath</td>
<td>Stretch to music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a course in tai chi, water aerobics, or Pilates exercise</td>
<td>Sit in the sun for 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change one thing to improve your diet</td>
<td>Sit in a garden or park and look at trees &amp; flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a nap</td>
<td>Get a massage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emotional Ways**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deep breathe</th>
<th>Share feelings with a friend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Look at the sky and daydream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hug someone
Pet your dog or cat

Sing or make sounds
Notice your feelings each hour

Write a letter
Feel your fear and take a risk

Smile at a stranger
Acknowledge yourself

**Mental Ways**

Say an affirmation
Read an inspiring book

Journal write
Make a “to do” list

Write a poem
Listen to motivational tapes

Email a close friend
Update negative beliefs

List things that will improve your life
Preview your day upon awakening. Review upon retiring.

List your needs and wants
Work on your family tree

**Spiritual Ways**

Connect with nature
Concentrate on a candle flame

Meditate or Pray
Look at a sunrise or sunset

Practice unconditional love and forgiveness
Practice a daily quiet time, a ritual to connect spiritually

Study with a teacher
Talk to your guardian angel

Join a church group
Do service for another

Learn about a religion different from your own
Write about your spiritual purpose
7. Grow Spiritually

This book teaches you how to empower yourself, giving many ideas and techniques to heal low self-esteem. Now, I will emphasize the importance of the spiritual aspect of healing self-esteem issues. We can do all the “right” techniques, correct our guiding beliefs and self-talk, journal write, heal our inner child of the past, and still have an empty feeling. We must at some point develop a personal relationship with the Source of our being to truly heal our self-esteem problems. What you call the Higher Power, God, Universal Mind, the Creator, etc., is not important. It is important to build a personal relationship with the Source and receive the gift and grace of Unconditional Love.

There are many ways to develop a personal relationship with your Higher Power. Some find being in nature builds connectedness, other people meditate, pray, read inspiring books, or attend a church, temple, or mosque. What matters is the direct experience of healing that comes from allowing this spiritual power to unfold in your life.

When disconnected from Spirit, it feels as if there are two parts of ourselves. One is the part of us living our day-to-day life on Earth with the little self, ego, or personality, struggling to find our way. The other is the spiritual part of us that is hard to grasp, touch, or experience with our five senses. Call this the Higher Self, Soul, or Transpersonal Self. We may know this spiritual part is there, but not have a direct experience of it. Instead, we get caught in the pain of our conditioned personality and feel like a child, needing something, but we do not know what. Our inner child, who may have experienced pain and suffering, dominates our reality and we feel a split from our Spirit. In reality, there is no split; the paradox is that we are one. Until we remember and are able to experience this oneness, it seems as if there is a separation or split within us, keeping us separate from others.
Many times this split shows up in relationship insecurities as we look for the perfect partner to make us feel safe and whole. Many people get sidetracked into falsely believing that romantic love, sex, money, or power are what they are looking for, wanting desperately to heal this split or void.

The truth is that you are capable and worthy of experiencing this wholeness. You can move from the powerless state of mainly living in your ego state (personality, little self) to an empowered Spiritually Awakened Being. Everything presented thus far in the book is to help you grow into your true Self, an empowered, aware spiritual being. Step by step you awaken to greater understanding of yourself, which includes the spiritual.

The ego is created from the past and is subject to addiction, pain, illusion, and fear. The experiences of childhood conditioned the personality. Since most parenting was not totally adequate (no blame implied), the little self is stuck wanting what it did not get. This focus on the past of pain, deprivation, unmet dependency needs, abuse, etc., creates the split from the Higher Self.

You can begin to heal this split by connecting with your Inner Self. You can do this in many ways, in meditation, prayer, contemplation, journal writing, remembering your dreams, being in nature, and honoring and listening to your intuition. Reading self-help books, listening to CD’s and going to lectures that promote self-growth help expand your awareness. A spiritual retreat is also very nourishing. You may need a teacher or counselor for a while to facilitate your inner abilities. As you begin to trust your inner experiences more and more, you will allow this spiritual healing into your life.

As you go deeper and deeper with your healing, you will want to know the answers to such questions as, “Who am I?, Why am I here?, What is my purpose?, How do I live my life to the fullest?”

Unconditional love from Spirit is already pouring forth from the Source of your being to heal the pain, suffering, and isolation of you not loving yourself. You don’t have to earn it, you need only accept it. Remember to LOVE YOURSELF from your Spiritual Self to truly heal low self-esteem.

As you heal yourself, you add peace to the collective consciousness of our world. World peace begins with you.
If this section spoke to you and you want more information, I recommend reading, *A New Earth, Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*, by Eckhart Tolle.

8. Say Affirmations

A powerful tool to override negative self-talk and guiding beliefs is to say affirmations to yourself daily. On the following pages are affirmations that build self-esteem. Say the statements over and over, out loud, with feeling until you feel like each affirmation is true for YOU. Earlier I suggested, you might read the affirmations into a tape recorder and listen to your tape while you are relaxing or going to sleep at night.

I unconditionally love myself and others.

Expect no one to unconditionally love you. You must learn to do it for yourself by connecting to the spiritual essence within you.

I am my own authority.

When you are willing to pay the consequences of your choices, both positive and negative, you become responsible for yourself. Notice that you pay the consequences anyway, so why turn your power over to another?

I am accepting of myself when I make mistakes.
It is okay to make mistakes. All humans do. That is how people learn and grow. Forgiveness is important in order to get past the critical self-talk.

I stop comparing myself to others.

Comparison lowers self-esteem. It creates a feeling of “less than” or “better than.” You are neither. You are incomparable.

I connect with my inner self to feel good.

Sound self-esteem is not based upon your outer appearances. It is a conscious expression on the outside of who you are on the inside. Get to know your inner spiritual Self — meditate, take classes, retreats, and workshops, listen to CD’s and read books on developing spirituality.

I set appropriate boundaries for myself.

It is okay to say “NO.” Some experiences are not healthy for you.

I am responsible for my own life.

No one else is to blame or to be given credit for who and what you are. You have the power to create your life the
way you want it to be. Awareness and risk-taking are the keys.

I allow people and events to “trigger” me in order to make peace with the past and become more aware.

Emotional reactions are bigger than the person or event triggering you. A reactive pattern of behavior results from many similar hurtful issues from the past. Examining emotional reactions allows you to be in the now, free of the past, and responsive rather than reactive.

I give out of a sense of love to the degree that I am filled up.

It is important to get your needs met. When you do, you have more to give and without an expectation of a return.

I give up being an emotional victim.

You have a part to play when you feel hurt. As you let go of unrealistic expectations and accept what cannot be changed, you will no longer “set yourself up.” Work on yourself. As you change, others will change in your presence.

I choose to develop and use my talents.

You build self-esteem when you express your gifts—whether playing the piano, writing, taking care of plants or animals,
or listening to others. Talents do not have to be achievements valued highly in society.

I align myself with the higher will and purpose.

You have a special purpose only you can fulfill. This will be revealed to you as you grow spiritually. Begin with getting to know and accept your Self.

I am healing the pain and fear from my past.

A difficult childhood does not have to cripple you for life. You can heal your wounded inner child by loving and nurturing yourself. Understanding yourself and taking risks empowers you to break free of negative patterns. Remember, you are much more than your conditioned past.

I stop value-judging myself and others.

Value-judging is using “shoulds” and “oughts.” It is irrelevant what you should do or should have done. It is more important to ask yourself what you are or are not willing to do.

I accept and allow myself to feel.

Feelings are not right or wrong. They simply are. They give feedback on what is going on within you. You can learn to put your feelings into words. Eventually, you can evaluate the thoughts behind
the feelings. Changing your thoughts and beliefs can change how you feel.

I listen to the wisdom of my intuition.

My intuition guides and protects me. As I learn to hear this quiet voice within, I allow the spiritual wisdom to direct my life. This inner guidance from Spirit gives me the courage to move forward day by day.

I am doing my best at each moment with my present level of awareness.

Your best includes looking at all aspects of yourself — physical, emotional, mental, spiritual. Go easy on yourself when you make a mistake, stumble and fall, or can not maintain or repeat a behavior or level of achievement.

I separate my behavior from the inner me.

You are a spiritual being. You are innately worthy even if your behavior is bad. Love and forgive yourself even when you do not like your actions, thoughts, or feelings. This builds sound self-esteem and helps you change unwanted behavior.

I make sense out of all my behavior.

You can understand all your behavior
when you look for what conscious and unconscious needs you are trying to meet. Also look at your feelings and guiding beliefs to see what is behind unwanted actions.

I get my needs met with healthy choices of behavior.

If you want to change behavior—
• Listen to your thoughts and feelings.
• Determine your needs.
• Choose healthy ways to get those needs met.
• Take risks with new choices.

I expand my awareness and understanding of myself so that I will have greater free will.

You will make wiser choices when you know your inner needs, wishes, values, goals, guiding beliefs, and purpose.

I set realistic goals and expectations for myself.

Goals and expectations need to be constantly evaluated, adjusted, and prioritized. Standards set too low or too high lower your good feelings.

I cease blaming myself for undesirable actions, thoughts, and feelings.

Take responsibility, not blame, for your choices. Blaming yourself lowers your self-esteem. Negative
consequences teach you to make more aware choices in the future.

I see aspects of myself in other people. They are my mirrors.

We all are capable of good and bad actions, thoughts, and feelings. Learn from everyone you meet instead of judging them. You can only see in others what is a potential within you. Emulate the people who reflect your goodness, love, beauty, and truth.

I communicate with an intention of being authentic and genuine.

Others may perceive even your good intentions as negative. You and your Higher Power know the truth of your intentions.

I let go of expecting everyone to like and support me.

Some people may never like you, especially when you begin being who you really are, your True Self.

I accept myself right now the way I am.

This builds unconditional love, which allows you to grow and discover more and more of who and what you are. Your place of power is right now, today, to accept yourself.
I accept everyone wherever they are in their level of awareness.

Acceptance does not mean you have to be around someone who hurts you because they are unaware or wounded or fearful. It simply means understanding them with compassion.

I nourish myself with love and light from my Spiritual Power.

The energy from Spirit is the real source of your love, strength, and power. You are a multi-dimensional being—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

I am worthy because I am alive.

You need do nothing to earn your worthiness. It cannot be earned. It is your birthright.

Now that you’ve read all the way through the affirmations, go back and choose one that does not feel true for you. Repeat the affirmation often until you really feel inside that it is true for you. Write it down and listen to what your negative self-talk says about it. Talk back to the self-talk and write some affirmations.

Go at your own speed. If it does not feel “right” to work on a certain affirmation at this time, honor the resistance. Wait until your intuition guides you to work on it.
Part VI: Tying It All Together

Summary of Ways to Build Self-Esteem

1. Build an internal locus of control.

If you believe you must earn love and worthiness from sources outside yourself, you may benefit from saying these two affirmations often. Remember to visualize and feel each deeply.

• I am worthy simply because I am alive.
• I receive unconditional love from myself and my Higher Power and do not expect this from others.

2. Simple thoughts to remember:

• Only you can be you!

• You are responsible for your life, your choices (or lack of them), your interpretations of people and events.

• You pay the consequences of your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

• You are not your behavior.
• All behavior makes sense when you look behind the behavior to what needs are motivating you. Remember, you are like the acorn doing your best under the conditions in which you are growing.

• Honor your resistances and listen to your intuition.

3. Make the Eight Keys of Self-Esteem part of your belief system.

4. Change guiding beliefs that are limiting, negative, and false.

5. Keep a journal.

• Write your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to people and events.

• Write letters to people with whom you are angry, but do not give the letters to them.

6. Create a support system.

• Join a support group.

• Take classes, listen to CD’s of lectures and workshops.

• Team with a friend who is also working on self-discovery so you can share and encourage each other.

• There is power in numbers, so have people around you who know and live these concepts.

7. Visualize what you want in your mind.

Change negative self-images to positive pictures, such as:

• See yourself standing tall, taking a deep breath as you preview in your mind a positive way to handle a challenging situation
you must go through.

• See yourself changing a negative habit to a healthy new behavior.

8. **Develop and share your talents.**

• Get involved and help others.

• Pass on what you’ve learned.

**Symptoms of High Self-Esteem**

• Accepting yourself and others.

• Feeling joyful and loving.

• Allowing yourself to make mistakes, stumble and fall, and occasionally fail.

• Taking positive risks.

• Feeling capable of solving your problems.

• Losing fearful thoughts.

• Living in the NOW.

• Losing interest in value-judging and blaming (no “shoulds” and “oughts”).

• Smiling frequently.

• Allowing people and circumstances to unfold.

• Accepting what must be by recognizing what you cannot change.
• Being balanced physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

To Summarize

Happiness, self-empowerment, satisfaction in work, good relationships, and success are all built on a foundation of healthy self-esteem. Love, respect, forgiveness, and tolerance for self and all others are valued. Healthy self-esteem is based on an internal frame of reference.

High Self-Esteem is a quiet, comfortable feeling of acceptance and love for yourself as you are. It is respecting yourself while honestly seeing your good and not-so-good qualities. High self-esteem is characterized by congruence between inner states (beliefs, feelings, attitudes) and outer states (behaviors, relationships, health).

Remember, most people have room to grow in the process of loving, respecting, and accepting themselves. The first step in healing low self-esteem is to recognize where the problems hide. Most people benefit from changing negative self-talk and updating beliefs.

May this book inspire you to do the inner work to heal yourself and create positive thinking patterns to live with high self-esteem. May this book nourish you to remember your innate worth.

Final Affirmation
I Take the Next Step for Me Today
to Grow Into My Full-Potential Self.

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**Suzanne E. Harrill**

Suzanne inspires people to build awareness and improve their lives through counseling, coaching, writing, workshops, and public speaking. She is a natural teacher, encourages self-discovery, and facilitates others in becoming their own authority. Empowering clients to grow in awareness, to heal limiting patterns and beliefs, to build a solid foundation of self-esteem, to create rich, quality relationships, and to live with meaning and purpose are top priorities in her work with clients. In the state of Texas Suzanne is a Licensed Professional Counselor. She is a clinical member of The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.
Moving many times with her husband and family to other parts of the US, and twice to Australia, provided many rich experiences with people, cultures, and ideas. Each place received her warmly as she continued her counseling, teaching, and public speaking.


The mission statement of Innerworks is, “To empower people to love and accept themselves, to heal pain from the past, to know their purpose, and to reach their potential individually and collectively.” Suzanne’s books and articles on her website do just that. They are the product of the wisdom gathered over her lifetime and a great contribution to helping others on the journey of self-discovery and inner healing.

Suzanne is married, has three grown daughters, is a grandmother, has a dog, and currently lives in Colorado. She enjoys traveling, hiking in nature, watercolor painting, creating original stained glass pieces, and spending time with her family and friends.

Contact her through the website for personal consultations, www.InnerworksPublishing.com