

Tam Kaur

BUY
YOURSELF
THE DAMN

flowers

The *self-love* guide to
growing, healing and learning
to put *yourself* first

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*Dedicated to my past heartaches.
Thank you for the pain and the lessons.
I found the light within myself in the
healing process.*

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INTRODUCTION

The story of how self-love saved me

I have been a hopeless romantic for as long as I can remember. I immersed myself in love stories, movies and fantasies, even as a child. From *Cinderella* to *Veer-Zaara*, I placed myself in every romantic narrative, dreaming of the day I'd find a Prince Charming to wait 22 years, run through an airport, kiss me in the rain, publicly declare their love for me and hold a boombox outside my bedroom window. Call me crazy, but I believed it would happen.

Throughout my teenage years, all I wanted was to be in a relationship, and shortly after turning 17 years old, I got just that. I was taken out on dates, I was surprised with an abnormally large teddy bear on Valentine's Day, I received romantic text messages every day – and all this affection led me to ignore the fact that my boyfriend . . . was still very much in love with his ex. It was obvious in how he would find ways to bring her up in most of our conversations and was absolutely outraged when he found out she had moved on to someone else. I spent a lot of my time feeling insecure and comparing myself to the ex. I would regularly look at her Instagram, trying to figure out what I was doing wrong. It took a few scrolls to discover they had everything in common that we didn't.

What hurt most of all was that his ex and I looked nothing alike. Was I not his type? She was petite, curvy and feminine; he casually reminded me I was too tall, too skinny and had shoulders that were too wide. I would occasionally slip away from the present to imagine what they would've spoken about . . . Why hadn't he unfollowed her yet? What made her so interesting? Was he still messaging her while being with me? The few friends I confided in about this problem reassured me by laughing off my concerns. 'She's got nothing on you!' and 'You're so much prettier!' they'd exclaim. I

wanted to believe them, and I tried, but nothing worked. I had this deep pit in my stomach and a voice that screamed ‘YOU’LL NEVER BE ENOUGH FOR HIM’. So I did what any insecure 17-year-old would do – I chased his validation.

Suddenly, only his opinion mattered. I wanted him to *see* me, to be *with* me and, most importantly, to be *in love* with me. So, throughout our four-month relationship, I wore more makeup, dressed in a way I thought he would like, played the ‘easy-going girlfriend’, gave him my undivided attention and pretended to be interested in all his hobbies. I thought it was working and that he had moved on from his ex, until one day my best friend confirmed the worst – my first ever boyfriend had confided in a mutual friend that he ‘preferred’ his ex to me. My world shattered. Was I not good enough?

I immediately called him to confront him, hoping it was a misunderstanding. After a few pitiable attempts to lie, he admitted what he said to his friend. He couldn’t bring himself to deny the love he still had for his ex. As soon as I realised that I could never live up to the idea of her in his head, I begrudgingly ended it.

I had spent so many years fixated on the idea of having a boyfriend that I was thrilled just to have somebody who said they loved me, even if they didn’t mean it. Only, it wasn’t just that. I had spent my teen years hiding myself away so much that even at the age of 17, I didn’t know who I was. I had always been painfully shy, socially awkward and extremely self-doubting. I didn’t want anybody to look at me or talk to me, but I was so desperate to be pretty and liked. And yet *I* didn’t like who I was. Every day I went to school and I compared myself to everyone around me, especially the girls who always seemed so effortlessly put together. No matter how hard I tried, how many YouTube makeup tutorials I watched or new clothes I bought, it never gave me the confidence they exuded. If somebody asked me what I admired about myself, I’d be lost for words. I ended up in this situation because I never took the time to learn and appreciate who I am and what I really want out of life. Unfortunately, I spent the following years refusing to do so . . .

Shortly after my first relationship, I found myself consumed by a tumultuous love for a narcissist. I was immediately swept off my feet due to his love-bombing (extreme over-affection as soon as you meet) tactics. I fell for it so easily because no one had paid attention to me like that before. No one had claimed I was the prettiest girl in the world with such conviction and no one had texted me essays of their admiration for my personality. I had

never thought of myself fondly before, so this attention felt comforting. The narcissist alternated giant gestures of adoration with threats, control, manipulation and emotional abuse (not that I knew it at the time). And I still stayed. Why? Because when it was good, our love felt like a movie – much like those I watched as a child. He wrote poems for me, he whisked me away for romantic getaways, he sent me lyrics that reminded him of our love, he understood my favourite film references, he'd greet me with fresh red roses and I would never have to ask him for anything because he would have already done it. It didn't matter that I'd quietly cry myself to sleep after our recurring 3am arguments. I was so grateful to have found someone who expressed their care for me so passionately that I felt I had to cling onto it, because for a girl like me, a love like this doesn't come so easy.

I held even tighter when he told me I couldn't wear dresses, belittled me in public or shamed me for feeling upset. I had put the narcissist on a pedestal and this was reassuring for my self-worth. I'd never imagined I could attract someone so effortlessly cool and stylish. Women threw themselves at him, yet he chose me. Girls at my school praised his appearance and it satisfied the validation I had desired for years. But because I placed all my worth in him, in something outside myself, I was trapped in this abusive relationship far beyond the point at which we broke up. In the three months after the relationship ended, I threw myself into excessive partying, drinking and shameless flirting. All while speaking to my ex whenever he felt like it and dreaming that we'd be together again. At this point, I had just started university. It was my chance at a fresh start, a new me and better opportunities, all of which I dismissed to pursue attention from someone who didn't really care about me. But my mind was filled with chasing temporary happiness and external fulfilment rather than facing my biggest demon – myself.

We broke up shortly after I started university. My newfound freedom and friends became a never-ending argument, which influenced the narcissist to dismiss our year-long love in a single text message. It broke me. I was left a shell of a person who would stop at nothing to get him back. Finally, though, in our period of on-and-off dating, I could see our relationship for what it was and accept that my life felt much more peaceful without him in it.

I started researching toxic relationships online and discovered the term 'narcissism' for the very first time. After a brief reading of the signs and behaviours, I realised that the perception of my 'true love' I had held onto for so long was nothing short of an illusion. There was nothing left to justify or deny when every manipulation and threat was explained so clearly on the screen in front of me. So, I left the narcissist for good on New Year's Day, a

year and a half after we first got together, and in the process of trying to piece my heart back together, I found somebody else. Somebody who was nice to me and conveyed nothing but pure innocence. It felt like the safe space I needed, yet I was deciding to settle because I hadn't healed from the trauma of my last relationship.

The truth is, I could only wrap my head around the break-up if I could find someone to fill his space. After all, how could I be single?! It's not like I could go about my days contentedly, not thinking about when someone would save me from myself. Plus, I had a point to prove. How could I have been so stupid as to have pined after a toxic relationship for so long? All my loved ones begged me not to go back and I had ignored them. Every. Single. Time. 'They just don't get it,' I'd say to reassure myself. In the aftermath, I realised I was wrong all along and that was a pain I wasn't brave enough to face. I had to prove I was mature enough for a healthy love and that what had happened to me in the past was not my fault.

So, I finally found a secure relationship. I was in denial throughout, convincing myself I loved this person and I could build a happy life with him. But without fail, every night, I'd lay awake beside him, staring at the ceiling, wondering if the narcissist was thinking of me. I tried to push the feeling away, to keep re-reading the 'cons' list I had written about him in the notes app on my iPhone. Nostalgia was my worst enemy, creating a montage of our best memories while minimising the bad. At this point, I wasn't aware that narcissistic heartbreaks cannot be dealt with the same. Still, I poured so much into trying to make this new relationship work, offering romantic gestures, always doing things his way, spending every single moment with him. It was good, I was getting there. I even brought him home to meet my family. Everyone loved us as a couple. *Maybe this will work after all*, I thought.

Then, lockdown hit. I moved back home from university and used the abundance of free time to start working on my passions and career while making the relationship work from a distance. But, inevitably, this life-changing event prompted a lot of self-reflection. I spent a lot of my time alone. So I started the practice of journaling every evening, which made my aspirations for life much clearer, but it also forced me to confront my delusions. I'd find myself writing about everything I wanted for my life and my partner never appeared in those plans. I also read self-development books and watched videos on how to progress in my dream job as a content creator. This finally reignited the spark that I had lost while seeking men over the years, and I had to recognise that I wasn't happy in this

relationship. Something didn't have to go terribly wrong for me to justify why this wasn't the right place for me to be. I decided to leave this relationship and focus on building a better life for myself over the summer. I could do this now. I had never experienced the desire to stay single before . . . was this a turning point?

It started off promisingly, with more time committed to seeing my loved ones while working hard on building my dream life. I fell in love with the process of developing my craft as a video creator, forming new daily routines, journaling to meet my highest self and focusing more on building more aligned friendships. Life felt thrilling again. I really thought that this could be the start of a new me. The girl who achieves all her goals, makes her family proud and gains true independence. But it came crashing down when my friend casually mentioned that this guy who we knew was interested in me. Except this wasn't just any guy, it was THE guy from our high school. Your clichéd confident, popular, arrogant-but-lovable, attends every party, wouldn't-take-a-second-look-at-you type of guy. The kind of guy you admire from afar but don't think too much about because you know you'd never have a chance. Well, that guy texted me. I stared at the first message in shock, my teenage self's warped self-image shrieking in astonishment. I casually sent a text back, reassuring myself it would just be a summer romance; I've promised myself too much after all.

Once again, I refused to take a real look at myself. I spent the summer months distracting myself with vision boards, late-night work and hours at the gym instead of confronting my deep-rooted discomfort with myself. Of course, I pined for more dates with the cliché high school boy; it inflated my ego and numbed my insecurities for a while, so I prioritised prolonging that feeling. I was addicted to running farther away from my younger self instead of accepting and loving her for all her oddities. This dating experience was like a huge neon sign in my head reading 'you're *prettier* now, you're *enviable*, guys put *you* on the pedestal' and that's all the validation I thought I needed.

Autumn rolled around and my summer romance was suddenly a very real relationship. At the time, I thought I was head-over-heels in love. In reality, I was practically playing tug-of-war for affection with an emotionally unavailable man. Our days consisted of me pleading with him to plan a date, hold my hand, take my picture, express his feelings, stay engaged in our conversations or reciprocate so much as a compliment. He always promised to change but nothing happened. So we took a break and while my heart

ached in his absence, he instantly followed his ex back, along with a dozen other girls.

That was the moment I could no longer deny that this person had never loved me. I got so caught up in waiting for him to show that he cared, but I was waiting for something that would never arrive. This hit my ego harder than the others due to the constant back and forth. He never deemed me worthy enough of any effort, and then moved on straight away, which made me feel overwhelmingly unlovable. That was my breaking point. There were no more tears left to fall. I was left experiencing an all-consuming rage running through my body instead, and I sat on my bedroom floor alone at midnight with no one to take it out on.

As I stared at my mascara-stained face in the mirrored wall opposite me, I swore I would never allow myself to encounter such treatment ever again. I made myself a promise to focus on myself for one whole year, to stop dating completely and to learn to love myself so unconditionally that I would never compromise my standards just to have company. No more self-hate, pity or shame. I didn't know how I was going to do it, but I knew the fire in my belly would get me there.

I know what you're thinking . . . *Four back-to-back relationships in the space of two years, an inability to stay single and extremely low standards?! All true. But honestly, I'm glad I met each of those men. Those relationships formed the start of my beautiful story of transformation and journey to self-discovery. I truly believe that it just had to happen that way for me. In the end, I realised I was always trying to be good enough for other people to love me and it only resulted in me drifting further away from my true self. Whereas actually, if I had spent some time focusing on being good enough for myself, the self-love would have allowed me to experience the care that I deserved AND prevented all the pain and heartbreak.*

Three years later, I still implement all the practices I learned along the way and my self-perception, detachment and self-worth have never been more unbreakable.

I have now reached a paradise where I inspire over 1,000,000 people online to master confidence, date themselves and give the love they crave back to themselves. I can't remember the last time I didn't feel enough in a room full of other beautiful people. I regularly spend time alone eating in restaurants and embarking on new life experiences. I made my dreams my number one focus and achieved everything on my vision board as a result.

My newfound confidence has allowed me to attract like-minded company and build friendships with the people I used to look up to. Most importantly, I have never felt stronger. I no longer look at the past in shame; I have healed to the point that I embrace every adversity that is thrown at me. I love every mistake I made, how I've handled it, how I've grown from it and what I've done to get to where I am right now.

In this book, I will teach you how to achieve a self-love mindset, validate yourself and never settle or spend years chasing others just as I once did. This self-love guide is split into three parts – understanding, healing and reawakening. Part one, 'Understanding', contains chapters on breaking down the real meaning of self-love, managing misconceptions and learning how to practise it on your new journey. Part two, 'Healing', is centred on coping with the challenges you will face when learning how to love yourself unconditionally and dealing healthily with the wounds that may hold you back from doing so. Lastly, part three, 'Reawakening' focuses on the new life you will live after you've let go of your past and developed a stronger relationship with yourself.

Your newfound self-love will influence how you show up in all parts of your life and how you navigate certain situations. In every part, I will break down the definition of each concept while challenging the limiting beliefs you may hold about them. I will explain what to do, while including various ideas and examples throughout to make this new belief system practical and memorable.

At the end of every chapter there is a chapter summary and a chapter homework. The summaries will refresh your memory on the practice of self-love as you revisit this book at various stages of your life, and the homework provides actionable steps that allow you to put everything you've learned into practice . . . so your time spent reading leads to *real growth*.

I started this journey as a hopeless romantic, seeing my singlehood as a punishment as I constantly awaited the love that would 'save me'. I finally provided myself with everything I was looking for, and I believe that you too can soon get to the point of your journey where you realise that you are the love of your own life.

PART ONE:

UNDERSTANDING

*Everything you,ve ever questioned
about self-love answered*





CHAPTER 1:

EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT ABOUT SELF-LOVE IS INCORRECT

What does loving yourself really mean?

I had always associated self-love with the surface-level meaning of self-care I had in my head – face masks, getting dressed up and buying expensive beauty products. I never took a second look at the concept and just assumed it was one of those overused inspirational Instagram quotes. I never really understood it and I was quite sceptical of the notion. After all, I'd always look in the mirror and assure myself I was confident and loved, but that didn't stop me tolerating low-value experiences from my long list of exes.

If you look up self-love in the dictionary, you will be faced with the definition 'regard for one's own well-being and happiness'. If you search online, you will be met with an abundance of articles which highlight self-care habits like taking a bubble bath or spending time with your loved ones. To me, self-love is much more than that. So, here's a list of the actual components of self-love that will allow you real understanding of this concept, which is the first step to introducing this practice into your life. Below, I have compiled these components I have discovered over the years while on my journey of self-love, combining them with my own lessons.

THE 10 COMPONENTS OF REAL SELF-LOVE

1. The five love languages

How often do you give affection to yourself and fill your own cup? Probably not as often as the care you give to everyone else, so let's change that. The five love languages were identified by American author Gary Chapman in his book, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. There is a popular test that uncovers your desired emotional fulfilment. It is believed that one 'language' always stands out in making us feel the most loved, even without the others present. Although this was designed for couples, it's actually a great way to understand yourself and your needs on a deeper level, and forms the perfect foundation when starting your self-love practices. You can take the test online (<https://5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/love-language>) and once you have your result, your job is to give your love language back to yourself. These are the five love languages and why they might be important to you . . .

Quality time: You value undivided attention, deep conversations, feeling prioritised and engaging in meaningful activities. For someone to make time for you while balancing a demanding schedule is a much more beautiful act of love to you than spending money or expressing compliments. You might prioritise looking after others, impressing your boss or being the fun, easy-going friend.

A close friend half listening while scrolling on Instagram or continuous rescheduled plans can make you feel undervalued – this is your hurt language.

For your self-love language, you need to start taking that time for yourself. It's easy to get swept up in daily life, errands, obligations, work, but how often do you prioritise doing things you enjoy? Here are some ideas: make reservations for dinner dates alone, take a 30-plus-minute walk to soak up nature and listen to the birds chirping, spend an entire evening painting for fun, solo travel for a whole weekend, meditate as soon as you wake up to ease peacefully into your busy day and, finally, take a break from everything to do *nothing* for the day.

When we put work and errands first, we are showing ourselves that we are not a priority in our own lives. As uncomfortable as it might feel to begin with, spending time alone regularly makes everything in life clearer – you are more connected to yourself and what you really want. Your happiness becomes a priority and thus your mental health is already on the mend. In a study done at the University of Reading, researchers found that adults whose solitude was down to personal choice experienced less stress and were more

confident in their authenticity. So it is only when we can sit alone with our own thoughts that we can truly grow as individuals and understand ourselves. If you don't know yourself fully, how could you ever love yourself?

Words of affirmation: You like to feel empowered, appreciated and uplifted. You value people communicating their appreciation towards you and, as a result, a simple 'I'm so proud of you' can make your day.

When someone speaks to you harshly or is over-critical of you, it represents your hurt language.

For this language type, it's important to take care of the treatment you are prepared to accept from others and from yourself. You can start practising recognition by writing a letter to your future self. Think of this as an opportunity to transport yourself through time. What do you hope you've achieved by then? What do you think your older self would miss about your current life? What do you hope your future self never forgets about herself? What reminders can you give her today to show her you'll always be rooting for her?

Another way to practise this love language is by celebrating yourself in the way you usually would others. After all, we usually give the love we so deeply crave, so it's time for us to actually make it happen for ourselves. Journaling is the easiest way to affirm your self-love. Write a detailed entry about a time you were proud of yourself. How was it when you got there? Why did this grow your confidence? What did overcoming your self-doubts look like? To make this a weekly habit, you can simply write down what you did well at the end of every week to acknowledge your accomplishments.

Complimenting yourself should never be reserved for the big fancy milestones in life. You are entitled to praise at any point of any day. Just the habit of speaking kinder words to yourself daily can change your life for the better. We often don't realise the harsh language we use to speak to ourselves when all we have done is make a simple mistake. Over time, our self-talk builds the self-perception we're stuck with and can be the difference between a strong foundation of confidence or depending on external validation to feel good about ourselves. Imagine how good life will feel when you become your own cheerleader.

Gift giving: Giving presents is the most passionate expression of love in your eyes. The process of learning about a loved one is expressed in figuring out what would add the most value in their life. Seeing their face light up

when you've treated them to something and thus showing that they're present in your mind is a major way you show love.

However, being given a gift with minimal consideration for your desires, someone forgetting a special occasion or simply dismissing the idea of giving a bouquet of flowers you walked past in the grocery store is your hurt language.

So, when was the last time you splurged on something for yourself? I'm sure you've lost count of the number of times you added something to your wish list but never allocated the time or resources to get it. We can get so wrapped up in the game of saving that we never grant a budget purely for our pleasure. You work hard, you try your best every day, you've fought and conquered every problem life has thrown your way, and yet you feel guilty for spending £5 on a festive latte from your favourite coffee shop. Life is for enjoyment, so commit to giving yourself a gift, whether it be in the form of a coffee, a new lipstick or a red velvet cupcake from your local supermarket.

Studies into the psychology behind treating yourself have shown that it helps you to regain a sense of control over your life, while simultaneously feeling happier, cared for and more confident. This isn't exclusive to spending money, but can be achieved through giving yourself the day off or baking your favourite dessert. When you put everybody or everything else first, you are constantly reinforcing the idea that you have not done enough to earn those small gifts of self-pleasure. But remember, you are always enough.

Physical touch: Hugs, hand holding, cuddles, kisses and any other form of physical affection make you feel connected. Just a gentle stroke from a loved one while sitting in silence can make you feel wanted. This is because touching causes the brain to release the bonding hormone oxytocin as well as relieving stress and anxiety.

It is often assumed that this love language is only possible to receive from another person but, once again, being alone does not mean you will go without. Hiding yourself away from the world, others being distant or cold or attaching to the idea that you will only feel connected with a partner by your side is you living out your hurt language.

Committing to your singlehood for a while should never equal isolation or a deprivation of physical closeness. Once you master the art of going to bed wrapped up in a fresh duvet and cuddling your favourite pillow, blissfully drifting off to sleep without wishing someone was by your side, you'll find peace in the fact that you are complete and loved as you are on