

Loving and Forgiving Yourself

Sometimes it is easier to forgive others than ourselves. And self forgiveness is especially difficult when we don't love ourselves. When this is the case, we are more likely to allow others to define and control us or expect relationships and material things to make us feel good. The truth is, happiness and positive self-worth must come from within. And most importantly, Understand that our ultimate worth is not defined by our relationships or the opinions of others, it comes from God.

How do I know if I love myself?

One good indicator of your level of self-esteem is your comfort being alone. Persons who dislike being alone and avoid it at all costs usually don't like themselves very much. This intense discomfort with solitude can put a strain on relationships and make friends and family feel smothered.

On the other hand, some people with poor self-esteem never want to be with others. They isolate themselves and avoid contact with others. This isolation keeps them from developing supportive relationships. Obviously, persons who feel good about themselves have balance. They are comfortable with relationships but believe their self-worth does not depend on others.

What Can I Do to Forgive Myself?

- Treat yourself as you would someone you care about. Take care of yourself physically and emotionally. Set and maintain appropriate boundaries with others and avoid exposure to persons who treat you in a demeaning or abusive manner.
- Accept yourself as human and less than perfect, but loved by God anyway. People with poor self-esteem tend to beat themselves with their mistakes and expect more of themselves than they do others. Avoid catastrophizing or exaggerating your mistakes. Try not to over focus on a single negative detail and dwell on it until it overshadows the entire picture and you no longer see the positives. Not everything that goes wrong is due to some inadequacy on your part.
- Avoid cognitive distortions or faulty thinking. Be watchful for "all or nothing" thinking where you see yourself as a total failure if your performance falls short of perfection. Avoid jumping to conclusions, reading the minds of others, and predicting or anticipating the worst.
- Avoid the misleading assumption that your negative feelings about a situation reflect the way things really are. Just because you feel it doesn't mean it is true. Carefully examine the big picture and try to decide objectively whether your feelings match the reality of the situation. Make sure feelings are based on the current situation rather than your history

- If there are factors that affect your ability to overcome distorted, faulty thinking or negative feelings, see a counselor or doctor to determine if depression, other mood disorder, anxiety disorder or other physiological or emotional issues are present. If these issues exist, their presence can make forgiveness of self and others very difficult.