

# Self Love Campaign



2023

*Thank you to all our participants!!!!*

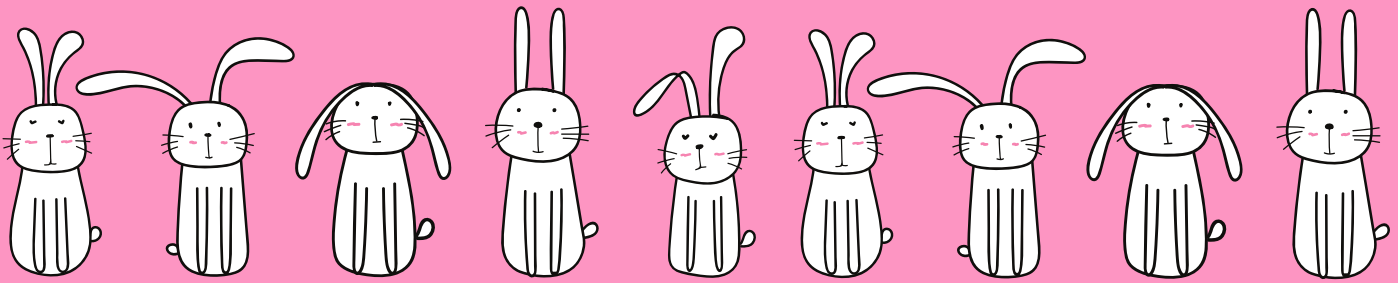
**This is a program of the Mental Health  
Association in Atlantic County in collaboration  
with United by Wellness Center**

# Self Love Campaign 2023



*Thank you to all our participants!!!!  
We are so grateful to have completed  
another February of self love!*

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## Self-Love and Bunnies

**I chronically overload myself with work and struggle to balance my jobs, education, and personal responsibilities. It makes it nearly impossible for me to regularly see my friends and maintain friendships, which has had a profound negative impact on my mental health. However, I was able to work self care in to my daily life through adopting two fluffy rabbits that live freely in my home. Each day I have to do the responsibilities to care for them - feeding them, changing their litter, giving them attention, and the like. This has really become my self care. Caring for them allows me to slow down, disconnect, and focus on the present.**



**Maryellen**



# Self Empowerment

I looked back at my self love story from a year ago and I couldn't help but think how much has changed. I have grown so much in the past year and I can look back at 2022 and say that I have been the happiest I ever been in a long time. I think part of the reason is because I learned the hard lesson that it is ok to put myself and my feelings first. I was so worried about helping and making sure others around me were ok that I put my own happiness to the side. It drained me and caused me to stay in relationships and situations that were no longer positively impacting my life, rather they were draining me and hurting my mental wellbeing. I made some tough decisions to get where I am today and I am so happy that I stuck with what felt right for me. I still have a lot to learn but I am so proud of myself for the progress I have made. I look forward to learning new lessons and welcoming new relationships into my life that will help me grow. I also want to thank my two best friends Jen and Maryellen who stuck by me and supported me through the bad times because it would have been much harder without them.



Emily

*Self-care*  
**IS EMPOWERMENT**



I believe that self-love is more of a journey than a destination. I am still finding ways to love and appreciate myself. Around my mirror, I have affirmations that remind me of my worth and strength. In my daily journal, I list three things I am grateful for. Whenever I find myself struggling with self-love, I do my best to take a step back and remind myself that I have unconditional worth. I have worth, even when I make mistakes. I have worth, even when I fail. I have worth, even when it feels like I have none. To me, self-love means that I radically accept myself, each and every day.



**Ashleigh**

# Self-Growth

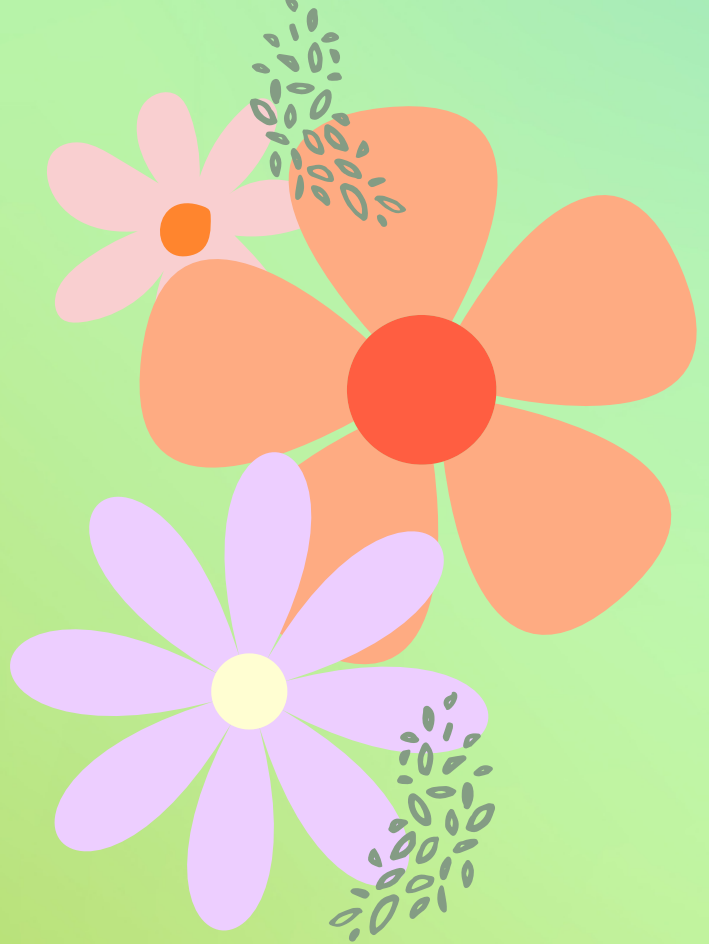


**I have tried to practice self love for some years now. I say try and practice because I personally find loving and nurturing myself is not something I have achieved in the past tense; but rather the journey I am on. Every day is a choice to love myself and grow in that practice. So self-love has evolved into self-growth. Every time I catch negative self-talk, start comparing myself or losing faith in my value is growth. Yes, you read that correctly.**

**Catching, being aware, identifying pitfalls that take away loving myself is growth in my practice of self-love. Practicing self-love is not a perfect state of being.**

**For the first time this past year I set out to have a big vegetable garden. I started researching how to build raised garden beds, start seedlings inside, what varieties of plants go well together, how to irrigate the garden, and on-on. Could I list out lessons learned, and tell you of my fails? Sure. DIY Fails/ Gardening Fails is fabulous click bate in our social media world. But instead, like my tomato plants I want to share the growth. Sometimes my negative self-talk has a root in reality. So instead of simply never growing watermelon again, I can extract what I learned from the experience and GROW in my gardening abilities. If I embrace learning as a process and a way to grow, I can practice self-love, honor myself and avoid the pressure to feel perfect. I can grow amazing tomatoes, and next year I can implement what I learned when growing watermelon, because that feeds my love for myself.**

Submitted by Carolyn Quinn



**I can't pinpoint the day it happened, perhaps it was gradual. But I now know that someone who loves themselves, doesn't poison themselves.**

**I look back at all of the things that I believed love was.**

**-Relationships, whether they be good, or bad,**

**-doing what "I want" even though I know it will have a negative outcome,**

**-and pushing myself to do the things that fit others expectations; things that made them love me.**

**Maybe these things were fulfilling short term, but eventually, they would fade away, leaving me feeling empty and sometimes self-loathing.**

**Love now is taking care of the body and mind that have carried me so far beyond where I ever thought I could go.**

**Love is listening to opinions but choosing to follow my own heart.**

**Love is accepting the yin and the yang that come with the human experience.**

**Love is loving others, not because it may gain their acceptance, but because you have so much of your own love, that you desperately want someone else to experience such an intense surreal feeling for themselves.**

**I could have never loved you before. No matter how much I bent over backwards for you, gave you the shirt off my back, or gave in to your requests. I couldn't love you because I couldn't love me. You can't pour from an empty cup.**

**Today, I can love you, because I love me.**

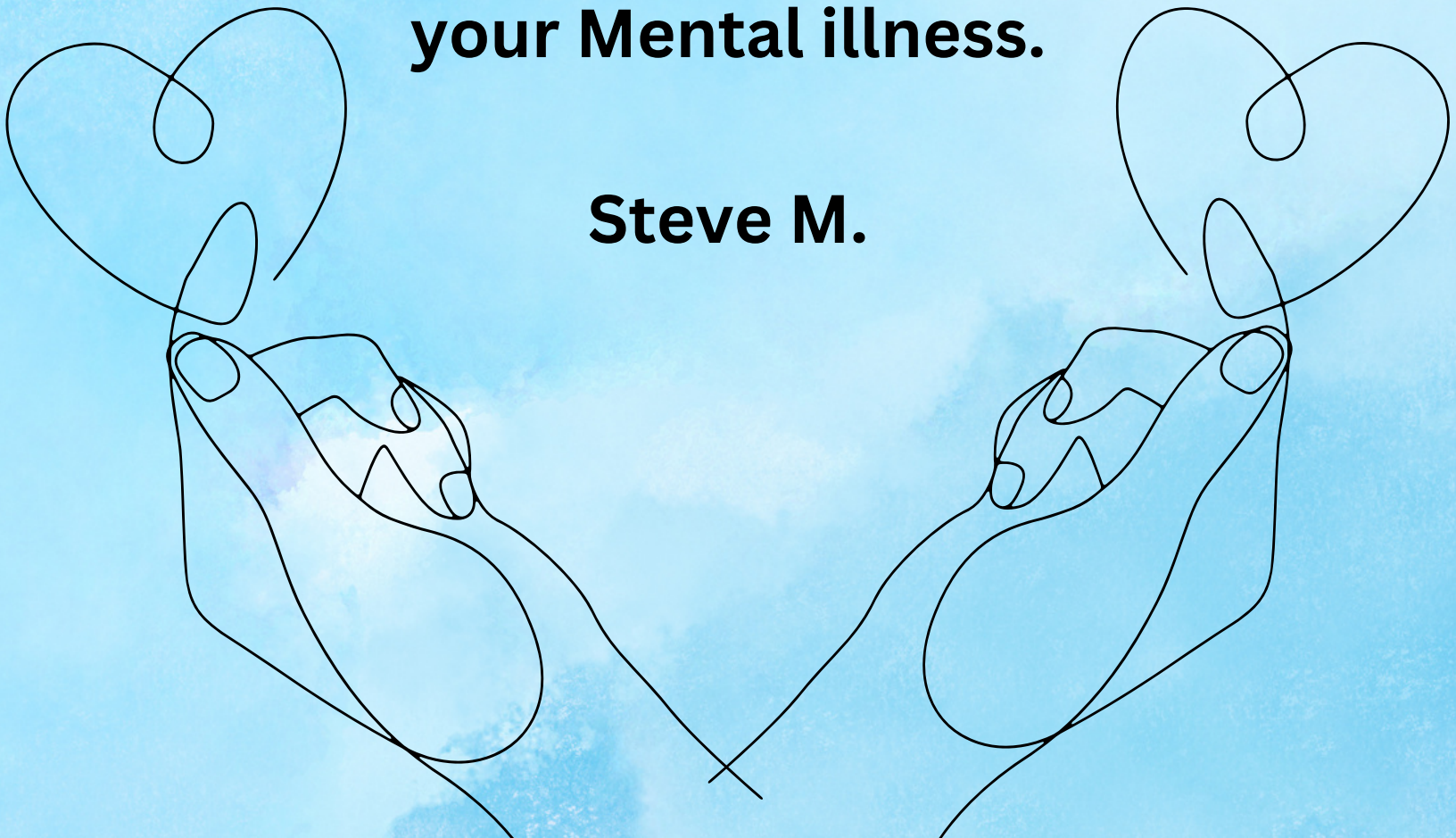
**Kristen**

# LOVE YOURSELF

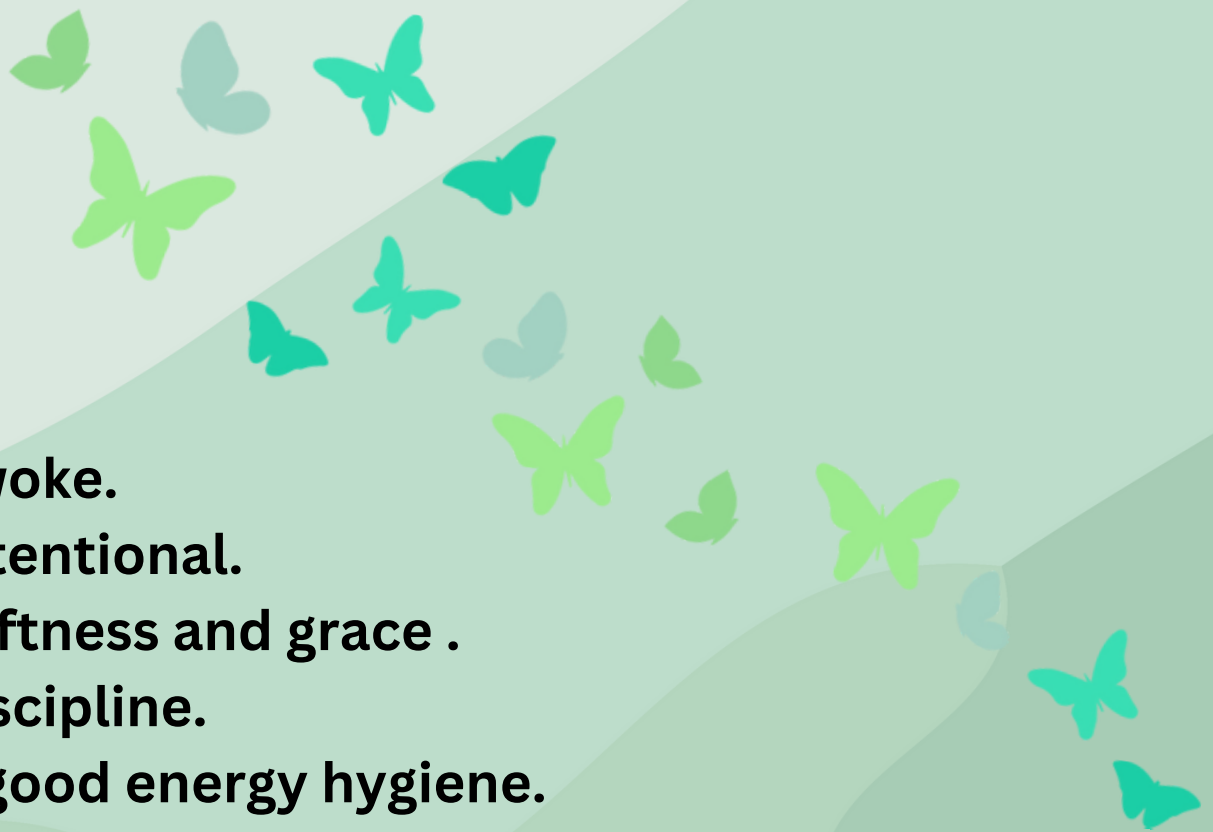
**For me Self love is loving yourself and getting along with your mental illness. This is the explanation from the point of you from someone who has Schizoaffective. I have to accept and acknowledge my paranoia and not yell at mental illness**

**Shortened versioned. Love yourself and your Mental illness.**

**Steve M.**

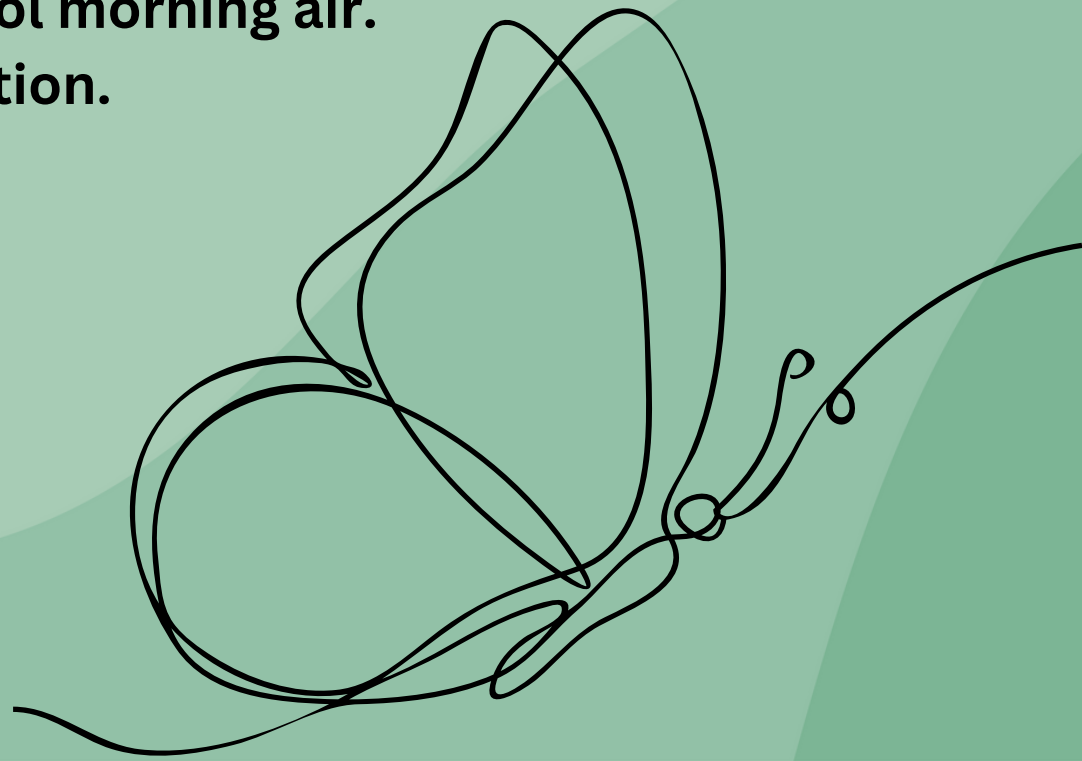






- Self-love is awake.**
- Self-love is intentional.**
- Self-love is softness and grace .**
- Self-love is discipline.**
- Self-love is a good energy hygiene.**
- Self-love is the space between the stimuli and the stimulus.**
- Self-love is solitude.**
- Self-love is self-soothing.**
- Self love is smiling at the person in the mirror.**
- Self-love is connecting with yourself deeply.**
- Self-love is unlearning hate.**
- Self-love is fresh cool morning air.**
- Self-love is my creation.**

**-Vidwatta**





Finding my self-worth is definitely an active process– and there is still much work that needs to be done– but I'll tell you about my journey so far. As I'm sure is the case for many, as a young girl, it was so easy for me to get caught up in society's idea of beauty and worth.

Subsequently, I grew up with a focus on appearance rather than my personality or character. By the 5th grade I learned how to apply makeup and straighten my hair. I would wake up every morning an hour before school so that I could apply my mascara, eyeliner, and do my hair before class. And it paid off. Many of the boys in my class had crushes on me and every selfie I would post to facebook would get an above average amount of likes (I'm cringing as I type that, but social media likes was actually a way that I sought out validation). After years of seeking validation through instagram likes and which boy in my class thought I was hot, I came across this picture, which reads "if the world was blind how many people would you impress?". I thought to myself for a while before I realized, if I were blind, I don't even think I would like myself. I then began the journey of trying to love the parts of myself that weren't physical. I started working on my sense of humor, which I am happy to say has slightly improved. I eat to fuel my body, and I workout to have energy. I still struggle with loving my body and I still wear makeup, but I am now much more proud and confident of the person I am today.

**Anonymous**



**How I personally found self-love was coming out of the closet. Growing up with homophobic parents taught me to eat my sexuality alive. I've always known that I'm attracted to women, but I hated it. It destroyed me and became a major contributor to my pre-existing depressive issues. I demonstrated internalized homophobia, which is a disliking of the LGBT+ lifestyle, more often than not due to suppressed homosexuality. I had a friend in high school tell me she saw me coming out as bisexual in college, and I took it in a negative manner. Over quarantine, one of my best friends came out to me as gay. His courage woke up something inside of me and inspired me. Over time, I came out to friends and my siblings. Besides my brother who is convinced it's "just a phase", everyone else was very supportive! I ended up coming out to my mother, who reacted in a negative way and told me I'm "going to hell for committing such a sin". Back before I accepted myself for how my brain is wired, her words destroyed me to the point where I looked forward to coming home from school every day and self harming. I am now at the point where I'm so comfortable in who I am where her words mean absolutely nothing to me. I do not regret the hardships I've been through, since they've created an irreversible armor within me. I love myself for who I am, and the fact that I have the ability to see the beauty in both men AND women.**



**Anonymous**



**Dear UBW Community,**

**I'm a single 51 year old woman who has been homeless since the beginning of COVID. I was evicted from my home and life of 22 years.**

**I was connected to Mill Hill in Trenton and have an amazing therapist. She has taught me the importance of a daily self care routine. I'm a survivor of child sex abuse, multiple rapes & traumas. I also attempted suicide and thank God I'm still here even though it's challenging everyday. I'm learning to love myself and realize that the bad things that happened to me didn't make me a bad person. My faith is very strong and I was able to forgive those who hurt me.**

**I write poems, journal, read about other people with similar issues, attend therapy twice a week and call self help groups. I am now on the proper combination of RX's that help me cope with depression, anxiety, PTSD, OCD etc.**

**I'm not a mess, I'm a message and I love sharing what I've learned to help other people.**

**I think it's important to have an emergency plan and support numbers in case of any suicidal or self harm thoughts.**

**I wrote two quotes in Fall 2022 "sometimes surviving the darkest times in life is your biggest accomplishment," and "I didn't choose to become a victim, but I vow to stay a survivor." I had my first call to a UBW group yesterday and was happy to share these.**

**Thank you so much for your services! Connecting with others who struggle with mental health issues is so important in my healing, it's like we have our own secret language and that comforts me.**

**Sincerely,  
Christina Wilkinson**





**My take on modern self-love is bath time.**

**I shower every day to release the dirt, dross, and happenings of the people, events, experiences, and daily encounters, but once a week I must take a long hot bath.**

**As a giver in life, to me self-care is about receiving. Showering is a very active process. It requires strength and energy to stand. It burns calories, so to me that energy is being expended and I want to receive. A long hot bath is my receiving. I turn off the lights and light candles. I put on soft music, I grab my favorite beverage, plop a bath bomb in the tub along with some Epson salt, I grab my bath pillow and slip into an oasis.**

**The influence of bathing as an oasis came from when I was a child, from the very popular Calgon commercial that touted, "Calgon take me away". It played so often on the tv that it made an impression in my young mind that baths are soothing, and relaxing. So, years later I still believe it and I choose to believe it because when I step into the bath life slows down, my mind begins to relax and I can breathe a deep sigh from all the happenings of the week and I am with myself. All my attention on me. I think that is a lovely way to care for myself.**

**With Gratitude,**

**Kim Reynolds**



**I have struggled with depression, anxiety, and most recently ADHD, so self-love has been a struggle for me my entire life. I discovered that self-love is not learned overnight, it is a journey that has its ups and downs. The biggest thing that has helped me with my self-love journey was journaling. Writing down my thoughts and seeing them on paper has helped me to navigate through my feelings. It also helped me to leave any negative thoughts about myself in the past. Write it down, acknowledge how I am feeling, tear up and throw away the negative thoughts about myself. It feels like a burden is released from within myself and I feel lighter.**

**Another huge factor in finding a sense of self-worth was surrounding myself with people that brought a positive energy to my life. I found that the people I was surrounding myself with were bringing me down and not benefitting my life. I felt like I was being torn down and I didn't like who I was when I was around them. I was a negative, unmotivated, and hateful person and it really affected my mental health. Luckily, I found the people that give me endless support and love. They lift me up when I need it and support me in whatever I am doing. I know I can lean on them without feeling guilty about asking for help.**

**My journey with self-love is a never ending one. I will constantly do things that help to improve my well-being and mental health. I know I will struggle at times, but I can now recognize that there are things I can do to help myself and people to lean on.**



**Self-love is something I have worked hard to achieve throughout my entire life. I find myself struggling with self-love when I am feeling a lot of anxiety and stress due to school, work, or friendships. With a new semester starting, and the work slowly piling up, I knew I would have to commit to kindness and compassion that allows me to find my self-love in trying circumstances. I love myself most when I am walking through the woods alone, listening to the world around me. Trees, grass, and wind are all aspects of life that make me feel most alive and the most beautiful. I connect with my favorite parts of myself on my walks and knowing that has helped me through the anxiety and stress of everyday life. Another act of self-love I practice nearly every day is meditation. Meditating brings me inner peace and allows me to take on my days with more grace, equanimity, and presence which has been monumental in my self-love journey.**

Serena



To those who have been abused,

I have been where you are. I have felt the despair of being made to feel inferior, used and demeaned. Trust me when I say that I have felt the great depths of the human condition. I have felt great pain but I have also felt the great heights of God's unconditional love.

You are loved. You are cherished by a power greater than yourself or I could ever be. I can tell you that this life is worth more than gold and it is worth more than what you have been through.

You are deeply cared for. There are really good people out there who will love you no matter what. There are people out there who will treat you in the way you deserve to. I am one of them. I have been abused very severely and yet I know that love. A love that looks beyond mistakes and darkness. A love that drives out hate.

Hate has no place in this world. Only love can transform this world in a way that is unimaginable and beyond that which we can ever speak of or think of. Anger has a place in this world as well but forgiveness is worth so much more.

Release that fear and anger. It is not correct to create fear in this world. Release the fear that drives hate and anger. Release all the tension of what you have been through.

I am sorry for what you have been through. You did not deserve it. You are stronger than the circumstances you have found yourself in. You are more than the evil. You are a great person who was born to do something with your life. You do not have to change the world. All you have to do is change the world for one person.

You are deeply loved. Deeply cherished for being you. You are to be respected. You are wanted, needed and accepted for you. You have a place in this world. You are to be loved in an appropriate manner. You are not to be used or disrespected. You are a beautiful being with feelings, emotions and behaviors. You are not an object. You are to be loved and cherished from the moment you are born to the moment you take your last breath. We all make mistakes but know that I love you.



Anonymous Submission





# Sorry: A story of self love

I am sorry for not being there when you needed me the most,  
I am sorry for not being strong,  
Instead I was weak, For the times when you helped me is when I allowed your arm to  
fall, In my fleshly state I allowed others to see a façade,  
Now I am the one to blame for not allowing others to see me,

I am sorry for messing up,  
For the times when I was frightened, You were there placing your arm on my  
shoulder,  
As every tear that is wiped away, With every hurt and searing pain,  
You held my hand, When I needed it the most, I dare not go too far,  
For if I did I would have gone astray,  
Now every hug tells me a different story,

It tells me that I am loved, It allows me to see a different side,  
With every embrace, Tear that I cry,  
It was you that made me see an unveiled life,

I am not afraid any longer,  
You thought I was down, But I am up...fighting,  
You thought I was counting sheep, But I am awake,  
You thought I had life all figured out,  
But if I did how could I allow you to work?



Chantele O



thomas cole voyage of life

# Self-Love

**“You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.”**

**Sharon Salzberg (paraphrasing the Buddha)**

**If only. In my years of recovery, I have seen self-love as a means to wellness and also as a necessary component to loving others. What I am working on now is BELIEVING that I not only have the right to, but I also deserve, my own love and affection. That is to say, I want to learn to love myself just because.**

**Just because I am a unique local expression of the universe.**

**Just because I am here, in part, to be loved.**

**Just because I am perfect imperfect--warts, mistakes, sins and all.**

**Just because I see parts of me that make me want to weep.**

**Just because I see other parts of me that make me laugh.**

**Just because.**

**Randy E**



# Modern Self-Love

Learning to love myself from the ground up is still a steady and slow journey. It's a journey that I didn't even know I had started until not long ago. When I was young, there was not a single nice thing I could say about myself. I criticized my own abilities and myself as a person for the longest of time, and I will admit, I still do. However, with time and support, I was able to begin loving myself by learning. I learned to embrace myself and who I am. What I can and cannot do, how I look, and everything in between is what makes me—me. Learning to love yourself can be hard, but it's not impossible. It all starts with appreciating the little things about yourself and reminding yourself that you are uniquely you and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that.

Anonymous



# Self Love Story



Self love was something that was always difficult for me to acknowledge and recognize within myself. I was so busy trying to pour love into everyone else that I had forgotten to give myself any love at all. It is so important that we give ourselves grace and praise what makes us who we are.

If you had asked me in years prior what I believe self love is to be, I would have immediately talked about my physical appearance instead of anything else. In 2023 I am making it a goal to appreciate myself more and love every part of the person I am becoming. For me this means acknowledging not only physical appearance but the qualities that I possess that make me me. I am excited to continue on this journey of self love and continue to learn ways of how to appreciate every ounce of me.

-Riley Finnegan



## WHAT SELF LOVE IS TO ME



- Going for a pedicure with my sister
- Watching a favorite tv show
- Having a hot fudge sundae
- Visiting my great nieces and nephews
- Going with family and friends to the beach
- Seeing my Grandson on Facetime and watching him Smile 😊
- Going on Facebook and looking at relatives, flowers, birds and funny jokes
- Reuniting in zoom meetings or in-person with my work family
- Looking at and playing with puppies
- Going to dinner with my husband

All these things bring me joy and let me take care of me!

**Karen W.**



I want what I want and I want it now / Silly grown girl sit yourself down  
The times of destruction must come to an end / It is time to be your  
very best friend

Time to hang up your hang ups / And clean that dirty laundry  
Toss aside words like bad and tawdry  
Judge not yourself harshly or with heard words of the past  
You are free of those anvils / Weightless at last

Choose love for yourself as you would a child / Coddle and soothe and  
coo and smile  
Sing melodic songs and rock yourself to sleep / To dream dreams of a  
life that IS so sweet

Do what is good for you not what covers pain / Dance in the sunshine  
and dance in the rain  
Life speeds by so toss your fears / Do what brings joy and sometimes  
tears

Love yourself as you would a small child / Tender, sweet and warm and  
mild

Today

Not tomorrow

Not weeks ahead

Do it now

Today

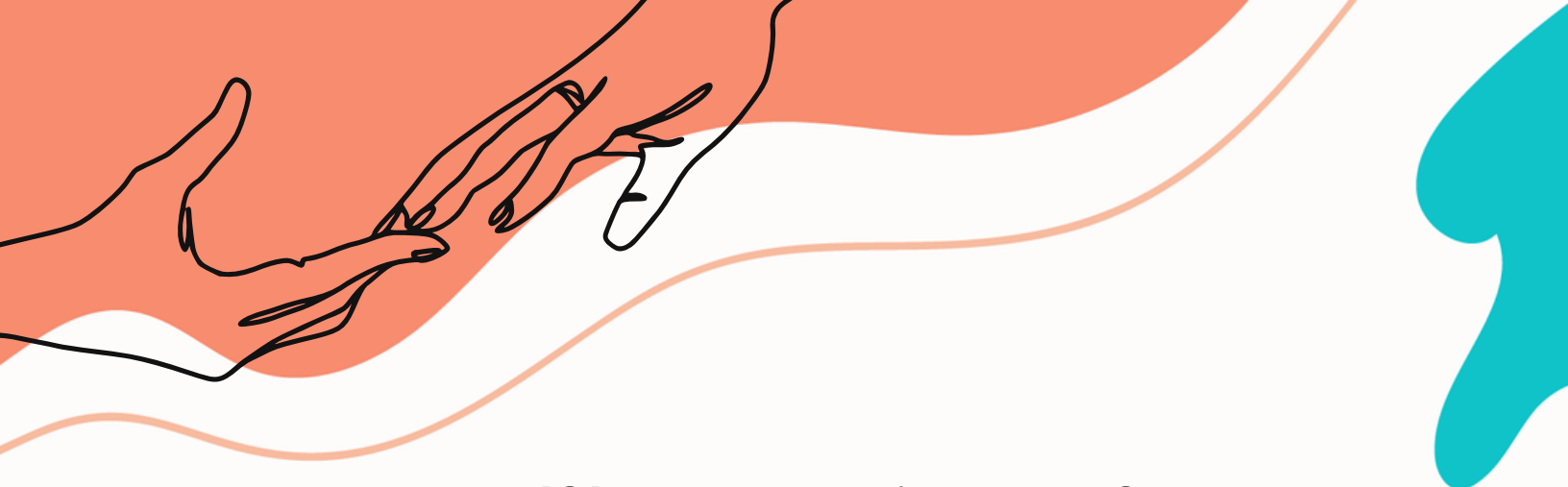
Before you are dead



Life goes by far to fast / To sit and ponder about the past  
Move forth you warrior / Your battle you've won  
Put your face to the sky / Bask in the sun

And bask in the sun

*Anonymous*



**For me self love comes in many forms.**

**Small Creature comforts such as a nice breakfast or A cup of of Hot Chocolate on a cold winter's day. Wrapping up in A comfy blanket with a Bunch of soft pillows around me.**

**Enjoying the Peacefulness of being by myself.**

**Enjoying good company.**

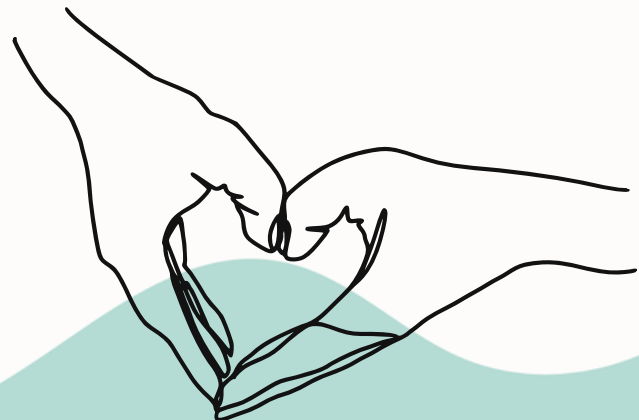
**Enjoying music and other media.**

**Taking in some Meditation**

**Taking in and appreciating nature including but not limited to sunrise, sunset, and listening to the rain.**

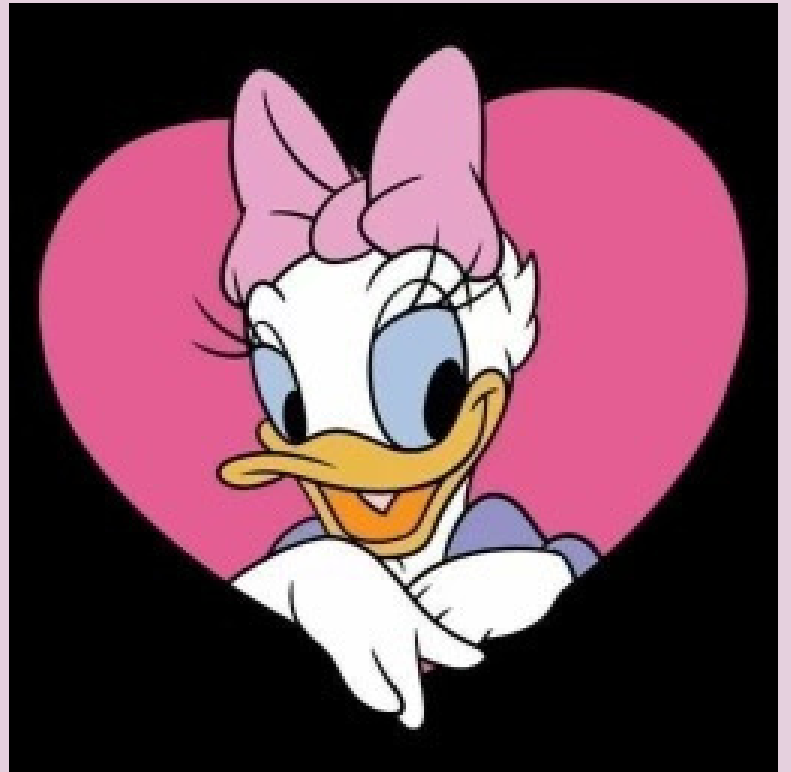
**Taking in what I learn in UBW Like... Being kind to my mind!**

**William**





**As I continue my journey.....I have realized overtime that I am important and inspirational. I take time for others and I also take time for my own self care.**



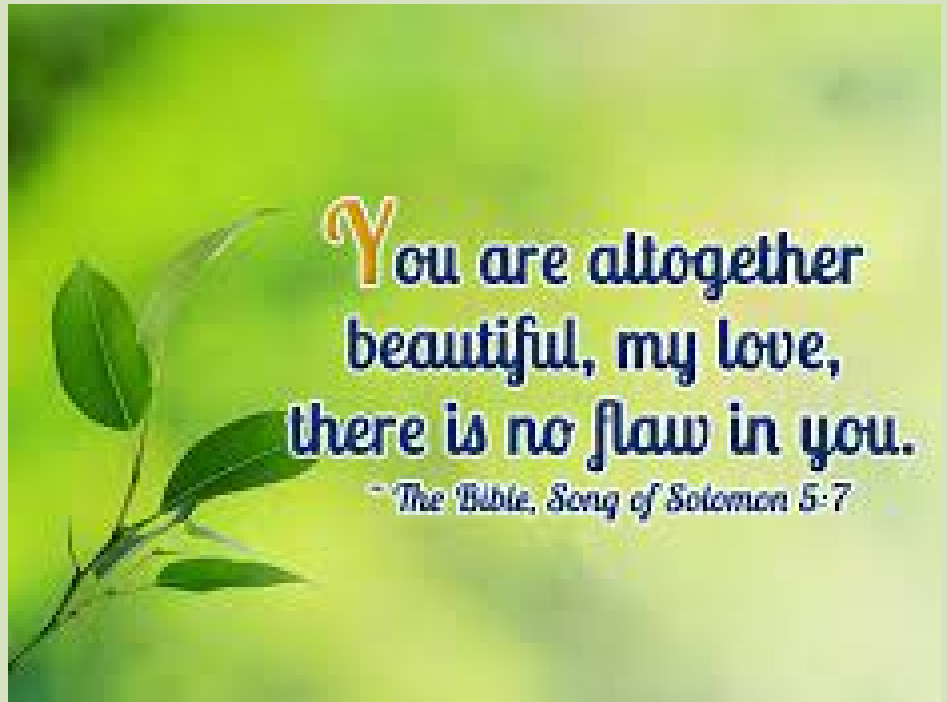
**I try my best in all I do. And I continue to share in our groups both my past and present experiences.I know that I see the best in others. And that my fellow peers and facilitators assist me to see the light. I will continue to live by my favorite saying: By Living,Loving and Laughing daily.**

**Xoxo Deb C.**





**If I were to  
write a story  
of self-love  
and wellness  
perhaps it  
will go a little  
like this:**



**Roses are red violets are blue how I wish I had a love like you,  
Oh, wait! I do I see myself in a reflection of a mirror oh I wish I  
looked like you, BUT  
I do I see a cascading current that is lovely just like my hair that  
I love to comb,  
The mirror does not lie I also see myself in a way that others  
may not see,  
In a moment I see the hard work that I do, waking up early as  
others may see, to take care of me,  
It was long and arduous but I finally found that I love me for me,  
The process was rough but I can see that perhaps the mirror  
reflection was red like my blood,  
You see as I pour into myself my blood boils not with anger but  
with passion,  
I hope you have come to love yourself like the currents that our  
life may hold.  
Chantele Olivo**

I have always struggled with my weight. I started putting it on in high school, and physical jobs kept it in check through my 20s, but by my 30s, I was obese. This is also when my depression worsened. Couple that with desk jobs then the defeated feeling from going on long-term disability and the bad habit of turning to food for comfort. The result is morbid obesity. However, in my 30s and 40s, I signed up for yoga and meditation courses for the first time, both of which I loved. Having also recovered somewhat from depression, I started volunteering in mental health, as well as taking short contract jobs to return to paid work. One of my lightbulb moments was realizing that for years I have tied my self-esteem to external factors like if I was in a relationship or the numbers on the scale when I weighed myself. So, I started paying attention to my inner self-talk and how I was treating – or mistreating – myself. While I had intimate relationships throughout my adult life, my self-esteem was always low; how could I expect others to love me if I didn't love myself? I always thought that positive affirmations were silly until I started listening to the people around me that used them and I saw the effects those statements had on them. Since I have also returned to making art, I thought I'd experiment with incorporating some of those affirmations. The result is pieces of art like the one I've included here. I am a work in progress. That's what I try to tell myself when my self-talk turns negative. May we all strive to remember that and be gentle with ourselves.



*Virginia Currah*

***“Love is a verb. Love – the feeling – is the fruit of love the verb or our loving actions.”***

***Stephen Covey***

**I have made a fundamental mistake my whole life, that is to say I have withheld self compassion and love because I do not feel love for myself. When I make a mistake or act badly, I beat myself up and then I beat myself up for beating myself up. But the negative self talk and the self-destructive behaviors have never yielded to more negative self talk and scolding about them.**

**I have started to practice the ACTIONS of self love and self compassion and, when I do practice, the results are amazing as I am able to soothe my hurt, my anger, and my fear. The actions I take are as simple as breathing in from the universal source, pausing, and breathing out love and peace to myself and to others. When I really hurt, I put my hand over my heart and rub gently as if rubbing the back of a baby's head.**

**The possibility for actions of self love and compassion are limited only by my imagination. I look forward to learning more tools and to growing my practice!**

**Breathing in I take from the universal source, breathing out I offer myself and all of you peace, love, and contentment.**

**Randy E**



**I've learned that self-love is a way of living in which we actively partake in fulfilling our happiness without worry about what others think. It is occurrences in our life that teach and remind us how deserving we are of directing our love inward, not just outward.**

**Anonymous**





**Self-love is an absolutely fundamental part of wellness - and without it, it can be evermore challenging to lead the joyful and fulfilling life you deserve to have. I have struggled with self-love for as long as I can remember. Even still, I find myself retreating to old habits of self-deprecation and self-doubting beliefs that I am not enough.**

**Up until recently, the belief engrained itself into me that what I had to offer the world and how I impacted my external environment around me was directly indicative of what my worth and value were as an individual. To me, the harder I pushed myself and the faster I reached for my own preconceived benchmarks of success, the more deserving I would be of loving myself. Because to have nothing to offer up or show for myself would mean I was nothing.**

**I am unlearning this core belief now and it is an active process - coming to realize that I am absolutely deserving of all the love in the world and more just for merely existing. There's no price or prerequisite to self-love - believing in yourself, loving who you are unconditionally, and trusting yourself will take you farther in this world than anything else. Self-love is the most valuable thing in this world, and it's completely free to own!**

**Seth**



# **The journey has come to an unanimous decision**

**Found what I was looking for before I even knew it was lost  
Setting boundaries necessary otherwise, disappear, my identity, before  
initials were embossed**

**Compliments I could not absorb, just tossed  
Exhibiting no self compassion came at such a high cost**

**Did not know how precious I was  
That's what deep despair does  
Need to treat myself with kid gloves  
Stripped opportunities to succeed, "inadequate" spread internal rumors,  
that was all the buzz**

**Out of pain, I did want to be  
Didn't know how, was this even within me?  
Only one way to find out, look inside and see  
Resilience a pronounced character trait, begging for a plea**

**Internal voice said I had unique traits  
Struggle recognized like lifting 100 pound weights  
Emotions overflowed the tear gates  
Now pronounce myself worthy and deserving as definition of self love  
states**

**By: Donna L. Haring**

