



EPISODE NO. 377

Self-Love Standards

Tonya Leigh:

When you look at yourself in the mirror, how do you expect to talk to yourself? When you make a mistake, what do you tell yourself? When you go into the kitchen to get something to eat, what do you grab and how much do you eat? When your body is tired, how do you treat it? When you are around people, how do you expect to be treated? The answers to those questions reveal what I call self-love standards. And in this episode, we're talking about potentially raising them so that you will have a more fulfilling and beautiful life. So let's dive in.

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here's your hostess, master life coach Tonya Leigh.

Hello, friends, and welcome back to the podcast. Today, we are talking about all things self-love, but I'm not going to be talking about fluffy feelings and wishful thinking. I want to talk about the power of self-love standards. Yep. This is all about your standards for your own love, what you expect of yourself. A standard is defined as what is accepted as normal or average. So when it comes to your own self-love, what have you accepted as normal or average? Do you tend to yourself? Do you trust yourself? Do you speak kindly to yourself? What do you expect of yourself when it comes to your own self-love?

One of the things that I often tell members of the School of Self-Image is you don't get what you want. You get what you expect. And when it comes to how we treat ourselves, there are certain things that we expect. And if you think about it, we often expect what we have tolerated from the past, what we have repeated from the past. And so today, I'm going to be challenging you to look into the future as to how you want to treat yourself. And let's start building off of that.

For me personally, I used to dream of being a woman who loved herself. I would see women out in the wild who I considered to be women who just appeared to me to have a respect and a love for themselves. And as much as I wanted it, I didn't understand how to create it. And so I thought to myself, "Well, self-love is going to get pedicures. It's taking care of your skin." And so I started there, but I realized it's way deeper than that. It was really about me setting standards for what I expected of myself for my own treatment.

And so I like to think of it like building a haven for your inner self. You wouldn't decorate your house with things that bring you down. You wouldn't tolerate cracks in the foundation. And so self-love standards are like you saying, "I deserve a beautiful strong space to thrive, and I'm setting the guidelines and the rules to make it happen." So we're going to start this conversation out with the power of self-talk, that constant chatter in our heads. And for me, it used to be this relentless critic always chipping away at my confidence. "Ton, you're not good enough. They're better than you. You don't have what it takes. Look where you came from. That's not possible for a girl like you." And I realized all of those thoughts were simply that. They were just thoughts. And I thought about the future me, that version that I dreamed about, the one that loved herself, how would she speak to herself?

And so I literally created a rule for myself that I would not speak unkindly to myself. I refused to accept that negativity. Now, that doesn't mean I don't have some crazy thoughts come in my head because I do, but I don't hang onto them. I don't coddle them. I don't nurture them. I don't make them grow stronger. I just noticed them. And I ask myself, "Does a woman who loves herself, does she allow that kind of thought to get beyond her red velvet rope?" And if not, I've just learned and I've practiced for years just letting it go, redirecting my attention, deciding in those moments what I want to think and believe about myself. I am always giving myself pep talks, every single day. I'll pass myself in the mirror and I'll be like, "Girl, I am so proud of you."

In fact, I was at a video shoot a couple of days ago and I had a moment in the bathroom when I was changing clothes, and I just looked at myself and I was like, "Girl, look at

you. Look at what you've created. Look at who you've become. Look at the lives that you've impacted." Take a moment and just really be proud of yourself. I literally gave myself that pep talk in the mirror. And I do this all of the time, especially when things are hard, especially when I have fallen down and failed, sometimes publicly. That's when you need it the most. And oftentimes that's when we're the meanest to ourselves. But I just refuse to do that.

I think about the little girl in me who didn't get some of these things, and I'm like, "Now I get to be the one to give them to you." And so I love picking myself up and being like, "Girl, I am so proud of you for trying. I am so proud of you for putting yourself out there. You are smart, you are kind, you are beautiful, and you have what it takes. Go get it, girl." This is the kind of stuff I say to myself. It may sound silly but think about the alternative, which is what most women are doing to themselves. "You're not good enough. You're a loser." I just coached a woman today and she was like, "I'm illegitimate."

We have all of these crazy thoughts in our heads that simply aren't true. But if we focus on them, we've lowered the standard for ourselves. And sometimes, I'll tell people that I do this, and their first reaction is like, "God, that's so cocky." And I'm like, "I'm not walking down the street saying this to everyone. I'm saying it to myself. Would you rather me beat myself up? Would you rather me talk negatively to myself?"

There was a video that went viral, probably, I don't know, three years ago with this little girl standing in front of the mirror. Some of you all may remember it. I can't remember exactly what she said, but she was basically giving herself a pep talk, like, "You are beautiful, you are abundant, you are joyful." And she was just working herself up. And I'm like, "We need more of that," because I feel like the pendulum has swung too far to the other extreme where we are so unkind to ourselves. And basically, we've just lowered the bar of what we expect of ourselves when it comes to our own self-love standards. So that's the first thing. Raise the standard of how you speak to yourself.

The other self-love standard that you can look at is how you treat your body. This is a big one for a lot of us. We have tolerated and settled for neglect when it comes to our own bodies. We sometimes don't even check in with our bodies to see what our bodies need. Does your body need food right now? If so, what kind? Does your body need to get up and move? Does your body need to rest? Does your body need to stretch? Raising your self-love standards around your body requires that you get in touch with your body and you start being curious about what your body is trying to tell you. And you cannot do that if you're constantly beating yourself up, if you're constantly

criticizing your body and telling your body it's not good enough, telling your body it should be better than what it is. When you're berating your body, there's no room to hear your body.

And so raising your standards around your body self-love requires that you listen and pay attention to your body. And part of this is also learning to appreciate your own beauty. My self-love standard is to acknowledge and celebrate my unique features both inside and out. As someone who used to be so mean to the reflection in the mirror, I just refuse to do that anymore because nothing good came out of it. It just made me feel terrible, which then led me to take terrible actions that just kept me perpetuating terrible results, truly. And so part of my self-love standard that I was talking about before around my self-talk is I just decided one day that I was no longer going to berate the reflection, that I was going to learn to appreciate my own beauty.

Now, I'm about to get really raw with you all and share something that recently happened. So some of you all may know this, but if you're new to me and new to this podcast, you may not. But I used to really struggle with my weight. At one point, I weighed over 200 pounds. I had an eating disorder. I yo-yo dieted, constantly gaining the same 30-plus pounds over and over again, gaining, losing, gaining, losing. You all know if you know. If you've ever been that, you understand. And I went on all the diets trying to beat myself into shape only to find myself just, I don't know, exhausted from white-knuckling it. So inevitably I would just start bingeing again. It was just a terrible cycle to be in. And for those of you who are in it, I get it. It takes up your whole life. You're always thinking about what you're going to eat, what you're not going to eat when you're going to exercise, what you're not going to. It consumes your life. Or at least it did mine.

And I finally realized, I was like, "Wait, if you want to lose weight, if you want to be a naturally slim woman, whatever that looks like for you, why don't you stop turning to the diet industry, which has not worked for you, and why don't you just start studying naturally slim people and how they think, how they feel, how they approach food?" And what I discovered was complete freedom. And I realized, "Oh my God, this all boils down to self-image." You will always prove to yourself how you see yourself. And because I saw myself as someone with a weight problem, I just kept perpetuating that by losing weight, gaining weight, losing weight, gaining weight.

Okay, so fast-forward to today. I no longer struggle with this, which is miraculous. When I tell you it's miraculous, I'm not joking. I never thought I would say I don't struggle with this anymore. I really don't. But now something else has happened.

Recently, I don't have much of an appetite and I've been a little concerned about it because I used to eat a lot, but my body just doesn't have much of an appetite. So I've lost weight and now I'm trying to gain weight, which I never thought I'd say, but I am eating, I am just doing all the things to try to put some weight on. But nevertheless, what I was going to share with you.

I looked at my backside the other day in the mirror. This might be TMI for some of you all, so just fast-forward. And I realized, number one, I never really look at my backside. It's not something that I do. So when I saw what I saw, I was shocked. I'm like, "When did this happen?" Because it was just like skin hanging. And I was like, "Okay, this is not what I'm used to looking at." But I didn't beat myself up. It was the most beautiful thing. I'm like, "Okay, this is what we're working with. I guess this is what happens as you get older and you lose some weight. Okay, I'm going to get in the gym. I'm going to work out really hard. Not because I don't love myself, but because I do." Can you all see the difference, the big difference? It is the intention behind the action that matters.

I used to go to the gym and work out because I was telling myself I wasn't good enough, that my body wasn't good enough. Now I'm going to the gym because I want to give myself love because I want to be healthy because I want to be fit. And yes, I want to put some muscle back in this derriere that I used to have. And so it's such a different standard. It's the same action but fueled by a different energy. One was fueled by self-loathing. This one is fueled with self-love. When it comes to self-love standards, it's going to require that you appreciate your unique beauty. And listen, as we change, as we get older, our bodies change. Our faces change. And so if you're so attached to certain ideals of beauty, you are going to lower your standards on how you celebrate your own. It'll never be enough because you can't look like you're 20 again if you're 50 or 60. You can try, a lot of people do, but you'll never be that version of yourself.

So it's about you loving and appreciating the version of you that you are right now, setting that standard. Because one day, if we're lucky, if we're blessed, we're going to be 80 and 90 and things are going to be hanging and we're going to have all kinds of wrinkles, and our bodies and faces will be different. And what a beautiful journey those bodies and faces have experienced. And there's beauty in every stage, in everybody, in every face, there's beauty. But if you're constantly comparing to either past versions of yourself or other people, you will not see your own. And this is a self-love standard that I would love to see all of us accept and raise for ourselves, that we are going to be women who appreciate our own unique beauty, both inside and out, looking in the mirror with kindness, focusing on what you love about yourself and radiating that confidence from the inside out. Because to me, that's what's beautiful.

It's so beautiful to be around a woman who feels beautiful, and she feels beautiful because she constantly focuses on the beauty of herself and the beauty of life. It is an energy. And so that is the second standard that we must raise. We must raise how we treat our bodies both with the words that we speak and how we treat it physically. And before I move to the next one, I just want to say, that sometimes raising your standards is very difficult. You're having to break old patterns and old habits, and sometimes it's even physically hard. I've been getting up and going to the gym almost every single morning and I can hear my brain saying, "But you've got a big schedule today. You've got so much to do. You can just do it tomorrow." I'm like, "Oh no. That's the old you." I'm raising the standard of taking care of myself, which includes going to the gym, working out, building my muscles, and getting strong. So it's not easy, but we can do hard things, ladies. We can.

Another self-love standard that I want you to take a look at and just see if it's an area that maybe you need to raise your own standard and what you expect of yourself is what you expect in terms of how people treat you. This is a big one. But I find that far too many of us settle. We allow ourselves to be run over. We allow ourselves to shrink into the shadows of our own lives. We put everybody else first and put ourselves sometimes third, fourth, fifth, or maybe even at the end of the chain. And life will give you what you tolerate. And if that's what you tolerate in your life, that is going to be what you constantly experience.

When you start saying no, when you start saying, "That's not acceptable," or you just remove yourself completely from a situation because it's no longer in alignment with you loving yourself, that's when you begin to get your joie de vivre back. That's when you begin to provide evidence of, "You know what? I am a woman worthy of respect and love." And it's hard to change that standard. You can experience the fear of losing people that you care about. You can experience the fear of not belonging. You can experience the fear of hurting people. But what I know to be true is that if you don't love yourself madly, ridiculously, unapologetically, this world will run right all over you. It's true. I've experienced it. People will take advantage of your weaknesses. They will exploit you. They will not appreciate you.

And this has been a hard pill for me to swallow because I tend to be very trusting. I tend to always see the good in people. Fonzi is always calling me out. He was like, "Don't be so trusting." And I don't want to ever lose that part of me. I actually appreciate my willingness to trust people and my openness to life and the world and the people within it. But I believe you can be that and still have high standards around how you expect to be treated. And this is an area that I had to face and realize that I had lowered

my standards. And I won't get into it in this podcast, but I did a lot of work around this. And I realized when it happened and why it happened because I didn't use to be like that. There was a period of my life for 10 years where I didn't let people run over me. I stood up for myself, and then I started to lower that standard.

And with a lot of love and compassion, I looked back as to why. And I was like, "Oh, that makes so much sense." Well, hello, I've raised that standard. And I will tell you, there is so much joy and liberation and a feeling of coming back home to yourself when you do that, because when you are allowing people to treat you in ways that don't feel right, maybe they make sarcastic comments about you, but they do it with funny sarcasm, and so you're like, "Did they just say that? I think that was a dig, but I'm not so sure. That's just the way they are." Or maybe they're just outright rude, or disrespectful, or they're constantly crossing boundaries, or they just don't call you, or they ignore you, whatever it is. When you do that to yourself and you allow that to happen, it's like you are leaving yourself every single time.

And so when you stop do that, you're just getting closer back to yourself. You're making the relationship with yourself more important than your relationship with other people. And that's what self-love requires. It requires that you make the relationship with yourself number one. And when that relationship is solid, you're going to attract different people into your life. You are going to, again, experience so much joy and freedom when your relationship with you is your main priority.

Now, let's take this conversation a step further and dive into self-image and what this all has to do with your self-image. You see, often our self-love standards get shaped by our past experiences and our self-perception. We can limit ourselves by repeating patterns and clinging to these outdated versions of who we think we are. But guess what? Self-image is malleable. You get to change that, and that's what we do within the membership.

So here's the key. To elevate your self-love standards, you need to elevate your self-image, and how you see yourself, and it works in tandem. As you begin to raise your self-love standards, you begin to see yourself differently. And as you practice seeing yourself differently, you'll be inspired to elevate your self-love standards. So instead of looking back at past limitations, at past experiences, what you have to do is look forward to the future you. Imagine the most empowered, thriving version of yourself. What does she do? How does she treat herself? What expectations does she hold? And then think about what standards you can begin to elevate in your life to mirror hers. And don't make this complicated. I recommend that you start with one or

two standards that you focus on until they become habits until they just become who you are.

So as you think about your future-focused self-image, reevaluate your standards. Instead of repeating the same old past patterns, ask yourself, "What standards would my future self set for self-talk, self-care, and personal growth? What boundaries would she establish to protect her energy and well-being?" And then finally, "What habits and activities would nourish her mind, body, and spirit?" By aligning your standards with your evolving self-image, you create this powerful synergy. You become truly like the architect of your own future, building a life that reflects your highest potential. So I am raising my glass to you raising your self-love standards. Have a beautiful week, my friends, and I will see you in next week's episode. Cheers.

Hey, before you go, let me ask you something. Are you stuck in a loop of dreaming and doing nothing? Are you sick and tired of waiting for your happily ever after? Listen. It is time for you to ditch waiting for someone to save you, and waiting for someday and put that crown on your head. It is time for you to create your own powerfully ever after with my free masterclass. I'm going to teach you three moves to unleash unstoppable desire, make bold decisions, and finally create what you want. So stop wishing and start doing. Go to schoolofselfimage.com/after and let's kickstart your dream life. It's free, it's fast, and it's way more fun than sitting around waiting for a frog to kiss you. I'll see you in the class.