

The Life Coach

Q My friends tell me I am my own worst critic. It's true: I know I am hard on myself. If I am honest I am also pretty judgmental of others and critical of them too. I'd love to change, but old habits die hard. I've read something somewhere about 'loving myself' but it sounds very 'Californian' to me. I really don't like what it means. Can you advise me?

A You are not alone. Being self-critical is one of the most common traits I come across as a coach.

Many of my clients either tell me, or discover for themselves in the coaching, that they do a fabulous job of being tough or even hypercritical about themselves.

Having the intention to change is a great first step. Getting really clear about how you are critical is helpful. For example: Are you quick to dismiss your achievements, whilst spending ample time focusing on what you believe are your shortfalls. Make a list of all the ways you are hard on yourself, and make a note of what you say to yourself.

Bear in mind all the things you say to yourself in jest too. I had a client, who wanted to find her life partner. She regularly described herself as an 'old maid'. While everyone, including her, laughed, the statement was having a negative impact on her unconscious. The more frequently she described herself in this way, the more doors closed for her. Similarly, I have noticed many people respond to the question 'How are you?' with a 'Not bad' – irrespective of how they really are feeling. Meanwhile their unconscious has picked up the word 'bad', and is busy creating some 'bad stuff' for them in their lives or is contributing to or prolonging 'difficult' feelings.

Be your own best friend

A simple way of remembering to love yourself is to treat yourself as if you were your own best friend. Talking to yourself in a kind and supportive way is key. Let's say, for example, that you regularly describe yourself as stupid. A more self-loving way to talk to yourself would be describe yourself as knowledgeable about one or more specific areas (and name them) and perhaps keen to learn about other specific areas. Aim to adopt supportive self-talk as your normal modus operandi. Make it a new habit. Some of my clients use images, computer screen savers and messages on the bathroom mirror as reminders to do this.

If something which you are directly involved with appears to go wrong, take responsibility for your part in it, and get clear on whether you did or didn't play a part in it. For example, if a relationship ends, what can you learn from the



experience for next time around? Do you tell yourself and others that your relationship failed (and quietly blame yourself) or do you tell yourself that the door is now open for your soul mate to enter your life. If you don't get the partner or the job you wanted, it can be very useful to remember the following: 'If the train doesn't stop at your stop, it isn't your train'.

I have noticed that clients often believe they are behaving in a loving way to themselves, but when we look at their behaviour closely it's clear they are not.

Challenge yourself (in a loving way) – with the help of a supportive friend or a coach. How much of the time can you honestly say that you are treating yourself with respect, finding sufficient time for the things you enjoy, giving yourself treats, letting go of guilt, praising yourself for your achievements and appreciating your talents. If you are not really clear about

what is great about you – ask your friends.

My recommendation is that you practise self-love at least 90 per cent of the time. Make self-love part of your mission this year – and watch your life transform! Give it a go – I promise you it works! **NH**



Karen Skehel is a leading holistic coach. She helps people achieve whatever they want in all areas of their lives – career, relationships and health being most in demand. Her relationship coaching has been featured in the media and on TV. If you would like help with a relationship, or something else, you may book "face to face" or telephone coaching with Karen. She can be contacted on 020 8748 1342 or visit www.karenskehelcoaching.com