

SELF-WORTH FOR SINGLE PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

This resource is intended to be read alongside “The Self-Worth Safari”, pp 93-95. In this book, you have already read the central insight: the power of bring a *loyal friend to yourself*, first and foremost, no matter what happens in the domain of love and romance.

The purpose of this resource is twofold:

- a) To highlight how self-worth is often diminished in our cultural thinking about romance – particularly when love is linked with self-esteem;
- b) To show how self-worth can be a gateway to happiness and freedom for single people.

When there is no lover around, the quality of your friendship with yourself is particularly vital. Unlike self-esteem, self-worth does not make demanding expectations, just that you be on your own side. On that basis, you can walk out your door – and return to it – in a state of joy and freedom.

While this may seem obvious, it's **not** how we've been taught to think. Let's start by exploring the extent to which our culture and our society usually makes love a *condition* for self-esteem and for feeling good about ourselves.

“YOU ARE MY EVERYTHING”

The twentieth century put romance squarely at the core of living. Hollywood, the lyrics of the Great American Songbook and popular novels all combined to carry a single core message into our teenage hearts and minds: love conquers all and represents the summit of human experience. So, it's hardly surprising that we may have made finding that Mysterious Other the key to feeling fulfilled about ourselves. Here are some of the common beliefs:

Belief	Problem
My life will be meaningless without him/her	Why create this condition? Even if life might be less happy without someone, it does not have to be meaningless.
I cannot meet / keep a partner: there must be something wrong with me	Now you have two problems: the loss of <i>them</i> , and the loss of <i>yourself</i> . You suffer an additional unnecessary burden: self-reproach (or self-blaming). See Shift 3: p95.
The party's over – it's too late for me	Perhaps. But if you go around in a state of guilt or sad resignation, then you almost certainly prove yourself right. This belief is often a self-fulfilling prophecy.
I'm searching for my other half	The very language of this implies you are less than complete.... possibly even less than 50% complete!
The problem is men/women: they are the ones that need to learn about self-worth.	No doubt many of them do: but how well is this attitude serving you? Blaming another (or same) gender for the state of one's love life can be a classic avoidance of self-worth issues.
It's all in the hands of Destiny	So this belief legitimises you doing nothing? Does this really express your sense of self-worth?

In today's society, I am not what men/women want	You may be statistically correct. However, since when has Love ever obeyed Statistics? More importantly, just how well do you value yourself.... really?
When I've finished working on myself / learning the lessons, then I will meet the perfect partner and be happy.	This is classic "Have - Do - Be" thinking, from the self-esteem school of thought: see Shift 6 on Page 149.
(Please add yours here)	(What is this belief costing you?)

To feel good about ourselves (self-esteem), we've been taught we need the Other. And if that Other is not in our lives, our friends swiftly assure us we are sure to meet Them. Because anything else would be so incomprehensible, so outlandish: this is something that they would never say to their friends! However, self-worth offers a different response: one that stands the test of time.

THE SELF-WORTH OPPORTUNITY

If you are single just now, you have at your disposal an amazing opportunity to establish real self-worth: one that people in a relationship do not necessarily access so easily. Why? Because when the orchestra of romance is playing at full crescendo, it's more difficult to hear the softer voice of self-worth beneath. Let's take an example:

It's Sunday afternoon. You are in a happy relationship, strolling hand in hand through the park. You feel good: appreciative about life, appreciative of your partner and of your life together. Right now, you feel a strong sense of self-esteem: your reputation with yourself is on a high. What about intrinsic self-worth?

The truth is: it's hard to know. Perhaps your self-esteem is indeed rooted in a deep sense of friendship with yourself.... but it is equally possible that it's totally conditional on the happy circumstances of life this Sunday afternoon. If you have a row with your partner when you get home, or they appear remote and distant tomorrow, you may well feel very different about yourself.

On that same Sunday afternoon, the single person gets to examine (and nurture) self-worth with no distractions. They get to walk in that park or sit under the tree in their own company. The quality of their friendship with themselves is laid bare: just as it will be when they go home to cook a solo dinner. Whether welcome or otherwise, this is a self-worth *opportunity*. Now, how can you use it?

GETTING RID OF BAGGAGE

One of the first steps is to get rid of the baggage: those outmoded beliefs that no longer serve you well as a single person. Here are some. Feel free to identify your own:

Belief	Alternative, based in self-worth
My life will be meaningless without him/her	Find your life's meaning where it belongs: with you. And even while you are looking, use the shifts in The Self-Worth Safari to find self-worth on the journey. Self-worth does not

	demand that you have identified your life's purpose, any more than it demands that you have found a partner.
I cannot meet / keep a partner: there must be something wrong with me.	I suggest you pay particular attention to self-acceptance: Shift 3, p95. Self-acceptance is acknowledged by most psychologists as an essential prerequisite for any change to occur. Even if there are aspects of your behaviour or personality that you wish to change, an unconditional friendship with yourself is a precious start point.
The party's over – it's too late	If this is true, then your friendship with yourself is even more important. However, by establishing self-worth, many people have discovered there are other parties to go to!
I'm searching for my other half	Read the entire book, with pen and paper. Your other half will hopefully appear out of the pages, or from the exercises ☺ You are closer to them than you might think.
The problem is men/women: <i>they</i> are the ones that need to learn about self-worth.	To fully step into self-worth, it helps to step <i>out</i> of the stories we tell about other people. However accurate these may be, they are just <i>stories</i> . By living life on the basis of self-worth, people often discover they no longer need these stories, nor the associated assessments of what others are doing.
It's all in the hands of Destiny	While results are often beyond of our control – particularly in the terrain of love – there is usually something we can do today. To make sure these actions don't just take us back onto the hamster-wheel of self-esteem, however, I suggest recap Shift 2 on Page 65.
In today's society, I am not what men/women want	You know best. However, there have always been exceptional people in every society, in every age – people who do not conform to the norm. If you encounter one of those exceptional people one day, you don't want them to meet some embittered, melancholy, resigned person, do you? ☺
When I've finished working on myself / learning the lessons, then I will meet the perfect partner and be happy.	Switch to "Be - Do - Have" thinking: see Shift 6 on Page 149. There is more to life than a series of lessons. This mindset is often a clever disguise for low self-worth. It's time to leave the schoolroom!
(Please add yours here)	(What is an alternative belief. One based on being a loyal friend to yourself... with no conditions, no strings attached?)

THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS

When I discuss these issues with single people, one of the voices that regularly surfaces runs something like this: "OK, John, I get the significance of self-worth and unconditional friendship with myself. On some days, I can really practice this and enjoy the results. But on other days, I get very lonely. When it comes down to it, I just don't *want* to be single!"

This is perhaps when the response of self-esteem diverges most sharply from that of self-worth. Self-esteem usually sees loneliness as a problem to be *fixed*, and starts exhorting you to start socialising, or

online dating, or joining a club, or improving your looks, or any of a hundred ways to *solve* the problem of loneliness.

While self-worth does not stop you doing any of those things, it first invites you to fully embrace loneliness and, in that way, to discover unconditional friendship with yourself as the root of any self-esteem. This was beautifully articulated by the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz:

*Don't surrender your loneliness so quickly.
Let it cut more deep.*

*Let it ferment and season you
As few human or even divine ingredients can.*

*Something missing in my heart tonight
Has made my eyes so soft,
My voice so tender. . .*

It is often in lonely places that you get to plumb the depths of your relationship with yourself. When you stop running away from loneliness and face it—without judging yourself negatively for that experience—then the “seasoning,” as Hafiz names it, can begin. You come home to yourself.

And then... you can join that club, go out dancing or whatever else your heart desires to do. You will be going there to share the abundance of what you have, rather than as a hungry soul searching to assuage your starvation.

DATING WITH A FULL CUP

“Grow a green tree in your heart, and perhaps a singing bird will come” (Chinese Proverb)



The hunger for attention is everywhere. Most of all, it's in that “hungry hug” in the eyes of the desperately-seeking, even when they think they are “totally cool with it”. Just watch the eyes of single people (and some not so single people) in social settings. Listen to their voices. Notice who they are looking at... and even who they are self-consciously not looking at.

Self-worth allows you to approach dating (if you still wish to) from the perspective of having a full cup. There is nothing to be proved. Even if disappointed with the response of another, the recovery time is dramatically short. Your friendship with yourself is intact, no matter whether others pay attention to you or not.

It's hardly surprising that quite a few people have tried to fake this happy state of “full cup” dating. Whether claiming self-love, psychological maturity or spiritual enlightenment, many quickly find that dating can be a bruising experience.



Today's dating marketplace – with its commoditisation of people into profiles – is a harsh climate, leaving a large percentage of people marginalised or resentful.

Real self-worth does not deny the bruises, nor the significant wounds that can be inflicted by the behaviour of other people. Nevertheless, with strong inner roots, we deepen our friendship with ourselves and move on.

SELF-WORTH AS THE GATEWAY TO HAPPINESS

Mark Twain once said that “a man cannot be comfortable without his own approval”. As you now know, the approach of self-worth goes even deeper: our own approval is just too variable and fleeting to provide sustainable roots in all seasons. So, we reach down inside us beyond the layer of all assessments – those of other people and those of our own – in order to find permanent anchorage and affection.

This means reversing some of the outmoded messages accumulated over a lifetime. One of these is about romance. You may *want* a partner – you may *wish* for this with all your heart – but you do not *need* a partner to be happy. Happiness is your affair and only your affair.

At first sight, this may seem a lonely, solipsistic message. But as anyone who has internalised the truth of it can tell you, it's the key to a whole new level of happiness and freedom. On that basis, you are free to take part in any activity or social event, because you are going there with a full cup already. Nothing can be taken away from you. There is nothing to be proved. You are already happy, so anything that happens next can add to your happiness rather than be a condition of it.