

The Northern Echo

Looking for love? Become a happier, more confident you first



Forget Valentine's Day, Susanna Halonen says those looking for love or wanting to improve an existing relationship need to learn to love themselves first

I USED to dream of finding my Prince Charming, the perfect gentleman who would rescue me from my sorrows, and bring me lifelong love and happiness. However, as I matured I learnt these were the wrong expectations to put on a relationship.

I realised that no one else can bring you love or happiness – it's something you need to learn to find within yourself. Yes, you can have amazing relationships that bring you joy and add more fulfilment to your life. But joy and fulfilment is also a

by-product of a healthy relationship that is made up of two separate individuals who are happy and loving towards themselves.

Nowadays, Valentine's Day has become commercialised and during February love is shouted at us from all angles. You might be tempted to work on improving your relationship, or perhaps find someone to love. Do that by looking inwards. Because you need to love yourself first in order to let others love you. Work on the relationship you have with yourself and you'll see your other relationships improve as a result.

Here are seven simple, science-backed tips to improve your relationship with yourself:

1 Start every day by saying one positive thing about yourself to yourself. This will set you up for success and happiness as you start your day on a positive note and remind yourself to appreciate your unique qualities.

2 Finish every day by spending two minutes writing about one thing you did well today. You're naturally very self-critical so it's important to make a conscious effort to praise yourself. Do this

every day and you'll start to realise how many things you do well. It's great to keep these all in the same journal or folder so when you are having a bad day you can open it up and cheer yourself up with your own positive words about yourself.

3 Dress to impress yourself. Wear what you feel confident in. This will immediately show. You'll act with more confidence and even walk differently. It's incredible how what you wear affects how you feel so make sure you've always got your A-game on.

4 Have a self-care routine. How much attention and care you give yourself reflects how worthy you think you are. Create morning rituals that give your body and mind the attention it deserves. Create evening rituals that help you clean the day off yourself and wind you down for bed. Do this and you'll find your wellbeing and confidence grow.

5 Stand tall. As [social psychologist] Amy Cuddy says: "Your body language shapes who you are." If you walk, sit and talk with good poise, you'll not only look more confident but also feel more confident. You'll even improve your focus, alertness and creativity. Start this habit by doing the Superman pose for two minutes before going into a high-stress situation (like a business pitch or a romantic date). You'll use your body to trick your mind into being more confident than it actually is.

6 Smile. It's the prettiest thing you can wear. It also naturally activates the happy hormones in your brain so you immediately feel more positive about yourself and happier overall. You'll also be spreading positivity and sex appeal wherever you take your smile because you're naturally more attractive when you smile.

7 Give out compliments and accept the ones you receive. It's so easy to brush a person off when they give you a compliment. Don't, it's really bad for your self-esteem. Look the person in the eye and say thank you whilst accepting it humbly. Make a mental note of it or write it down. And give out compliments too. When you're able to give compliments to others it shows you're comfortable in your own skin, are able to appreciate other people's qualities and are not afraid of competition.

Put these tips into action and you won't only improve your relationship with yourself, but you'll also improve your relationship with others and your chances of finding love. When you're confident in yourself and happy with who you are, you are also kinder, more generous and more loving towards others.

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