

# Learning to be 'good enough'

**I**t is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere"  
 Agnes Repplier, "The Treasure Chest"

Have you ever felt less than? Nothing you do seems good enough? Have you ever given 110 percent and it is still not good enough? If you have, you're not alone, as many people have. Why is it that most of us experience not being good enough?

There are many reasons someone may not feel as if they are "good enough." Many people carry an internal negative sense of self that originated early in their development. The etiology may differ for each person. For some they may have experienced a highly critical parent, for another a history of abuse, or for someone else a narcissistic parent could cause them to feel invisible in their relationship. For all of these scenarios there is a lack of emotional nurturance and consistent empathy by their caregivers. These early connections affect relationships and create an internal sense of self-esteem. Consequently, many people feel insecure and inept in sustaining worth because there exists an emotional void.

As a way of understanding and addressing these feelings, it can be helpful to ask two questions.

1. Why is it I don't feel good enough?
2. Why do I frequently doubt myself?

In these situations where there is frequent criticism and judging by someone significant it can be difficult to let go of critical thoughts. I liken it to playing tennis. About a year



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ago, I entered a competitive team after playing recreational tennis for a year. I entered not feeling ready and I was quite insecure. Although I consistently practiced three or four times a week, when I entered a match, my doubt set in. I didn't trust my skill set because I played inconsistently. Each time I missed the ball, I became critical and had to talk myself back into focus. I realized that I was highly attentive to the error, which was interrupting my seeing each moment as new. It was not so much about winning, but knowing I was giving my best effort. I started to experience more security when being more attentive to both strengths and weaknesses.

So, how does this self doubt change? Begin by asking the two questions mentioned above. The reasons differ for each of us and may be many. In the beginning, it is through understanding that change can begin to occur. Next, it is important to strengthen self empathy and compassion. In strengthening and growing in empathy, this process can also grow in relationships. Doing an inventory of your passions, strengths and positive relationships can also help. For some, daily journaling is a way of nurturing this growth. Striving to feel good enough is a pervasive experience in relationships. The intensity or wound to our

sense of self may of course, be more severe for some than others and help from professionals may be indicated as one gains understanding and insight.

In a recent National Parade article (October 5, 2014) devoted to Steve Harvey, he discussed "reinventing himself." He described living out of his car for three years when he was in his twenties, two failed marriages, and needing to do a lot of soul searching. When giving motivational speeches, he states, his "mission is to show people you can screw up, face big hurdles, as he has repeatedly and still move to find happiness. It is never too late." He found happiness in his third marriage and eventually he built his career as comedian, TV show host and radio disk jockey.

In summary, I recently saw an award-winning Broadway show. The lyrics to the final song embraced the essence of finding your "own good enough." What follows is a brief excerpt from the song "Raise you up/ Just me," by Cyndi Lauper, suggesting the important ingredients toward personal success.

- "One: Pursue the truth
- Two: Learn something new
- Three: Accept yourself and you'll accept others too
- Four: Let Love shine
- Five: Let pride be your guide
- Six: Change the world when you change your mind" ...

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