

The Building Blocks Of Happiness



With Erica Terblanche on the Lundi Khoisan show
on Mix FM 93.8

Tune in every Wednesday at 10h10 for your weekly
soundbite of scientifically validated, practical happiness
coaching and learn one new happiness habit every week.

WEEK 5

Relationship with Self

We all know the commandment - "do unto others as to yourself" - or "love your neighbour as yourself".

1. **How we feel towards and treat ourselves is how we will treat others.** For example - if we are supercritical of ourselves, we are most likely going to hold the same standard for others.
2. **We also know that the view we hold of ourselves is self-fulfilling.** If we think we are loveable, attractive, smart, hard-working, kind - we will be more likely to behave that way, and our body language and the look in our eye will communicate this view and the world will treat us accordingly. The opposite is also true - if we believe we are unworthy and too much of this and too little of that - you can be sure the world around you will create your reality accordingly. How we think is how we experience the world.
3. We know that much of the increases in **mental health issues** and the rapidly rising levels of depression, especially among young people are related to **self-esteem issues and feelings of not being good enough.** And without a doubt, it is exacerbated by the ubiquitous comparisons on social media.



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If we are honest today and really think of how the background critic in our head speaks, we can all be super critical of ourselves at times - and fail to love and appreciate ourselves and fail to have patience with our imperfections and forbearance for our weaknesses and forgiveness for our faults.

Did you know that we have between 35 000-65 000 thoughts a day and that is estimated that 95% of these are repeat thoughts - yes - we are on a loop all day long - thinking the same self-critical thoughts as yesterday - and ultimately this negative self-talk puts us on a downward spiral of emotions. Which we know is bad for our mental and emotional health and for our relationships.

Dr. Kristin Neff, who is famous for her work on self-compassion shows how negative self-talk and constant self-criticism triggers the amygdala and a fight or flight response and the stress hormone cortisol. She has also provided compelling evidence that people who are more compassionate and positive towards themselves are far more likely to be healthier, calmer, and experience less stress and depression than people with a negative self-view.

But how do we change this almost automated story of not-good-enough?

There are three words to remember here:

AWARENESS
ACCEPTANCE
REWRITE

Let's start with **AWARENESS**.

First, we have to catch ourselves when that negative self-talk starts. At that very moment of awareness, we have to intercede and firmly hijack the negative story we tell ourselves about ourselves.

Second, we have to accept our imperfections.

By this, I don't mean to turn a blind eye to behaviours that we are aware that we have to change - or to condone them.

No - not at all. But what I do mean, is that we face and **ACCEPT** that none of us are perfect - we all have work to do to overcome our personal weaknesses. Every one of us has a dark side - the muscle that we have to build is to have **COMPASSION** for our weaknesses, and not loathe ourselves for it.

- Because, the more likely we are to have compassion for our dark side, the more likely it is that we will face and address it and not try until death to deny it out of fear or shame.
- And because the more likely we are to have compassion for ourselves, the more likely we are to forgive the failures and imperfections and dark side in others. And give them the chance and the grace to do better.

Thirdly, we need to rewrite the negative self-talk tape.

Each time we hijack the negative self-talk and every time we actively appreciate something about ourselves and each time we have an affirming self-view, we rewire the neurons in our brain too.



Marissa Peery, one of the UK's top life coaches offers a very simple and effective exercise for this. She says to write out in lipstick on your bathroom mirror or on a large post-it note on your computer or make it the screensaver on your phone - write in capital letters - "**I AM ENOUGH**" and every time the negative self-talk goes on repeat say this to yourself - "I AM ENOUGH".

Rewire your brain.

- She says to write it large and somewhere visible - like the fridge door - so that the children can see it - because they need it as much as we do, if not more.

Just feel how saying this to yourself changes your physiology and your mood. And how it opens your heart and makes you more receptive to others and more forgiving.

I AM ENOUGH.

Repeat it enough times and soon the world will respond with a resounding affirmation that it is indeed so.

BECAUSE IT IS TRUE - I AM ENOUGH - AND SO ARE YOU. Not one of us is perfect - but every one of us are worthy of happiness and love.

And finally, to close the topic of relationship - once we both come from this place **OF YOU AND I ARE ENOUGH**, our relationships have a much better chance to be whole and healthy and real because we no longer have to hide or pretend, but can receive each other with warmheartedness and grace and compassion for what is not perfect.

Next week we will talk about the things that give our lives **meaning and purpose**.