

The Antidote to Self-Harshness & Resentment

There are two poisons that have hurt me so much over the years:

1. **Self-harshness** — I have so often been critical of myself, harsh on myself, about all my little failures, that this harshness has become one of the biggest things holding me back.
2. **Resentment** – I’ve increasingly become aware of how I have a mental pattern of resentment that hurts my relationships, especially with my loved ones. They don’t behave the way I want, so I notice myself feeling resentful that they couldn’t do things differently.

The truth is, these are the biggest problems for most of us. We don’t love ourselves the way we are. We don’t love others the way they are. And the harshness that results is painful and harmful to us and the people we love most.

How do we deal with these two poisons?

There’s a simple antidote. It’s not easy, but it’s pretty simple.

It’s a **habit of loving that which we normally dislike**.

In fact, this small habit can transform *all* of our problems.

Imagine for a moment that you’ve been **procrastinating** (I know, a stretch, just go with it). You’re running from something that makes you uncomfortable, and you go to your favorite distraction instead. What if, instead of running from the discomfort and uncertainty — you gave them some love? You wouldn’t have to run. You’d face the uncertainty with love, and just work in the midst of it. (Btw, I have a course on reprogramming procrastination going on right now, join my Sea Change Program to practice with me.)

Imagine that you have **anxiety** about something coming up (let’s say a presentation). You’re afraid of the presentation, because you have uncertainty about how you’ll do. You want to get away from this uncertainty. What if you practice loving this uncertainty? You might not feel so anxious. What if you gave some of that good love to your feelings of anxiety as well? You wouldn’t be harsh on yourself about being anxious.

It’s easier said than done, of course. So how do you get better at it? Practice.

Antidote Practice

Here’s how to work with this practice:

1. **Imagine a good friend or loved one**, someone who you can love whole-heartedly with ease. Send this person some love right now. Wish for them to be happy. Love them just as they are, in all their wonder. Now here's the important part: notice where in your body you feel this love. This is your Love Muscle (it's not dirty, get your mind out of the gutter). Practice some more, so that you can call up this feeling of love, from your Love Muscle, at will.
2. **Now turn your Love Muscle onto something about yourself.** Notice something about yourself that you like. Work the Love Muscle, and love this thing about yourself.
3. **Practice on something you don't like.** Now try turning the Love Muscle onto something about yourself that you're usually not fond of. You know how to use the Love Muscle by now, so give it a shot. How can you love this thing about yourself just as it is? Imagine a good friend who is having a hard time, who is flawed ... can you love that good friend? Can you produce the same feeling of love about this part of yourself? Try it with different parts of yourself, both physical parts and mental/emotional parts of you.
4. **Practice on other people.** Notice things about other people that you like. Send love to these things. Now notice things that you don't like. Send love to these things as well. Practice on people all day long.
5. **Practice when you feel resentment.** When you notice yourself resenting something about another person, or resenting their behavior ... send love to this part of the person. Love them as they are. Exercise your Love Muscle. Send love to the part of you that was feeling frustration or resentment.
6. **Practice when you're feeling harsh on yourself.** Whenever you notice yourself disliking something about yourself, send love to this thing about yourself. Send love to the part of you that dislikes the other part.

Basically, you can practice all the time. Over and over, reminding yourself and practicing.

You can practice on everything:

- When you have been lazy or procrastinated, notice the feeling of harshness or disappointment that comes up in yourself. Give this feeling your full attention, and all of your love.
- When you eat too much, or eat junk food, notice the feeling of pleasure but also guilt. Give both these feelings your love.
- When you are interacting with someone and they annoy you, notice the annoyance. Give some loving to this feeling of annoyance, and to the person who is annoying you.
- When you've been distracted all day, maybe feeling a bit anxious ... notice the feelings of being distracted, of rushing, of anxiety. Love these feelings with all your heart.
- When you notice your heart shutting down to someone, or to some experience, notice what it feels like when your heart starts to shut down. Love this feeling of shutting down, and love the thing you're shutting down to.

- When you're meditating and feeling like you're not good at it, notice what not being good at it feels like. Turn to that experience and give it some love. Love the part of you that is attempting this at all.

And so on. Every experience, every feeling, every person, every aspect of life ... you can love it as the Dalai Lama would, as Jesus would, as the biggest-hearted Goddess of Love would. You are practicing loving life itself. And that's something worth falling in love with.