

How to Love Your Dark Side

We all have a side of ourselves (or multiple sides) that we don't want others to see. You might think of this as your "dark side," or the Gollum in you (as my friend Adam calls it).

It might be that you procrastinate, waste inordinate amounts of time on a certain site or game, drink or smoke too much, are jealous, ungenerous, critical of others, depressed or lonely.

These are not usually things we want others to see. But what if we tried to embrace our inner Gollum? What if we learned to love our dark side?

This is so against our usual approach that it might seem impossible. Love our inner Gollum? Absurd! We normally want to hide it, get rid of it, cure ourselves and forget everything about it.

But what if, instead, you tried:

1. Telling someone else about your dark side, allowing some sunshine into this dark area of your life.
2. Being gentler with yourself, and seeing this side of you through loving eyes. For example, maybe you are tired and are craving a rest, maybe you're sad and want relief from that sadness. In this way, our dark side is not bad, but a (misguided) loving way to relieve our difficulties.
3. Try giving yourself some compassion rather than being harsh on yourself about it. If you can wish for an end to your difficulties, and give yourself some love, maybe your dark side doesn't have to be such a bad thing, just another experience in your life to love.
4. When you start going to your dark side, pause here and allow yourself to just feel whatever pain you're feeling, rather than going down your usual path of numbing or running away. Stay in the pain, and feel it fully. Immerse yourself in it, with curiosity and love.
5. Laugh about your inner Gollum, telling others about it with some humor. It's just another part of you, nothing to be ashamed of. And admitting it to others helps them connect to you in a more intimate way. Own it, and embrace it.

This won't "cure" us of anything, but it is a gentler, more loving way of seeing ourselves, and dealing with the difficulties we face. I encourage you to try to love this side of yourself, as I'm trying to do with myself.