



The Monthly LOVELetter

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POWER OF FRIENDSHIP

August 7th is “Friendship Day” and, hopefully, we all have that one person we consider our BFF (best friend forever). They can be someone you’ve known since high school or college, a co-worker who progressed beyond a work acquaintance, or a family member who understands you better than anyone else. But, have you ever considered that you could be your own best friend? That we need to be on just as friendly of terms with SELF as we are with our BFF. We need to encourage SELF, befriend SELF, and trust SELF to make good, empowering decisions—and we need to be able to call SELF out when we wallow in bad feelings and hopelessness, or call SELF names, or even when SELF is about to make a destructive decision.

But it is the unconditional love of friendship that will allow SELF to face the truth of your decisions, and to embrace the decisions that have already been made—even if they ended up in mistakes or dark paths. It is the light of friendship that can bring SELF back from the edge, from straying off the path. Being able to trust SELF is just one more step on the way to fulfilling your dreams and achieving that priceless trait of mental peace. The best way to remind SELF that you matter is to start by befriending SELF and being true, reliable, forgiving, and honest.

We would do any of these things for our friends, so why not do them for ourselves? Often, we are our own worst enemies, and we aren’t even sorry for or hesitant in it. SELF doesn’t need a ‘yes man’ from you; SELF needs a best friend who cheers and challenges them to be better, to be stronger. That means not listening to the haters, being brutally honest to SELF, and maintaining a sense of awareness that gives you an avenue to voice your feelings without fear.



“Birds of a Feather” by MeliSwenk (2009)

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"To Know Me...Is To Love Me...Just Because"

Created by MeliSwenk (1 July 2016) from Lovin Self blog post "2BMe" (25 June 2016).

BEFRIEND SELF

Bring to mind the most caring person you've ever known. Generous, selfless, and always spreading the proverbial wealth of emotional support and just general good vibes.

Merriam-Webster's perspective on who a friend is, is outlined as "a person who you like and enjoy being with" or "a person who helps or supports someone or something," which might be a charity or specific cause. Being SELF's best friend, however, won't always be a party, and it won't always be as easy as saying, "Because I can." Providing support to someone else can be difficult, but being able to support oneself—putting aside motivations of narcissism or self-centeredness—seems almost impossible these days, without deep-seated sensations of guilt or selfishness. Unconditional support for the work SELF is doing, or wants to do, though, needs to start with you! If you don't believe in what you're doing, or what you're capable of doing, no one else will be able to support SELF in achieving your dreams.

Now, go back to the person you thought of at the beginning of this article. Think about all the things that person has ever done for you or has said to you to make you feel good, supported, and loved. Would you ever think to do those things for SELF? Now, imagine that person telling you that SELF can't do this, because you tried once before and failed. Or, imagine that person telling SELF it's better to just give up because what you're doing is just too hard. That sounds cold, doesn't it? Or, like something a heartless someone might do, right?

But, it is somehow okay to do these things to SELF?

You can befriend SELF spiritually and put SELF first so that you have the compassion, understanding, and resilience to see when you are not being a good friend to yourself. All it takes is swinging the perspective around from

the negative to the positive. Being less negative toward SELF can help you be more positive with those around you, even if they weren't your friend to begin with. And that can help make the entire world a better place.

Here are five ways to help you befriend SELF:

◇ **Accept Your Own Beauty.** You really are a unique snowflake surrounded by other unique snowflakes. It sounds silly to put it down in those exact words, but SELF brings certain super powers and strengths to every situation. Embrace those strengths and set SELF up for success by understanding that just because you aren't "like everyone else" doesn't mean you don't have anything offer up for everyone else. Some people are sitting back and waiting for someone else to tell them what their strengths are. SELF needs to hear from you: Where does your passion lie? What makes you feel the most confident, capable? These are your strengths; flex 'em!

◇ **Have Faith in Your Decisions.** No BFF worth their salt will simply stand back and let you make a poor decision. SELF should be treated no differently. Generating an awareness of how you make decisions can help SELF make even better ones, which means admitting that bad decisions have been made in the past. However, fear of the unknown or failure should not stop you from making the decision at all. With the Internet and social networking being so immediate these days, there is always a source to be found when it comes to making any kind of decision: from what shoes to wear to where to invest your money to which career path you should pursue. Have faith in your decisions by helping SELF make the most educated and best directed ones from here on out.

◇ **Come to Your Defense.** Our acceptance that everyone's opinion has weight is a good one, in thought. However, that may not take into consideration the people who are negative simply for its own sake.

These people spew hate and doubt just to make themselves feel more powerful. It is in SELF's best interest for you to stand up to this shallow and misguided power play. Remember that true power comes from positivity, from hope, and having the confidence to stand up for SELF when you believe what you're doing is important, is helping others, and most of all is helping you live the best life ever.

◇ **Practice Brutal Honesty.** Brutal, cutthroat, and razor sharp honesty. Pulling the wool off of your eyes is one of the hardest and best things you can do for SELF. Take a serious and substantial look at SELF, at your environment, and at what you're doing right now to make your life less stressed and the best it could be. Define what "the best life ever" is for SELF, and don't worry about how someone else may define it or how they will react to your definition. We each only get one life, and to subject yourself to the guidelines of someone else trying to meet their own dreams or goals means that SELF isn't living at all.

◇ **Give SELF the Benefit of the Doubt.** The best part of that brutal honesty is being able to give SELF the benefit of the doubt. Be willing to admit that SELF may not have all the information when a decision is needed, but taking the chance to make a decision based on what you already know and have done in the past. Like the bird in the branch that does not worry about the branch breaking, you must have faith that your wings will carry you.

WHY JOURNALING WORKS



Source: FBCCollegeMinistry.com

Journaling is a conversation with SELF about all the elements of life that we can celebrate, enhance, and often feel badly about. Journaling can be an activity that organizes your thoughts, simply collects them, or maintains them so you can measure growth. Recording everything from “impossible” dreams to the darkest and bleakest of life’s obstacles can give SELF a haven for free and pure expression. Generating a habit of free and pure expression in the written form can eventually become a habit of free and pure expression when interacting with others.

Writing in a journal can have a two-fold result. On one side, it can make SELF more articulate in expressing emotions and aware in the origin of certain emotions. On the other, it can lead SELF to become self-obsessed or more prone to wallowing in black or bleak thought patterns. It isn’t so much that there are “rules” or there is a “right way” to journal, as much as there is a “right way” to journal that works specifically for you. Some people may benefit from freeform writing, just getting out whatever is in SELF’s head for the pure benefit of expulsion. Whereas, others may benefit from a structured journaling session guided by specific, introspective questions that direct the expression so it doesn’t get muddled with the overwhelming negative thoughts one may experience.

Keeping a journal is a great way to streamline and analyze any variety of thoughts, good, bad, or simply overwhelming. Sometimes going back over those thoughts may make you feel self-conscious, even if you never plan on sharing your journal with others. At the time they are filling our heads, thoughts can feel logical, right, set in stone, but seeing them after some time has passed can make SELF realize just how fleeting or even silly some thoughts ultimately end up being. Feeling that self-consciousness or embarrassment at your own thoughts is perfectly normal, but embracing that feeling will make it easier for SELF to spot those highly charged, and yet ultimately fleeting, thoughts when they arrive and how to embrace and then let them go.

If you think journaling could help SELF, the first step is in determining *how* journaling is going to help you. Is it a place to express freely and without feeling potential judgement? Is it an area where you can explore your “impossible” dreams and lay out goals for meeting them? Is it an opportunity to view how SELF has grown from a point of trauma through the time it takes to heal? All of these are viable reasons, and only just a few, to begin journaling on a regular basis. Understanding how this process of journaling will eventually help SELF is the best way for you to determine how to go about doing it.

“A true friend is someone who sees the pain in your eyes while everyone else believes your smile.”

—Source Unknown

BUILDING EMOTIONAL MUSCLE

Hey, SELF, Don’t Believe the Hype!

In a world with instant communication and viral media, it is likely that at least one reader here has been harassed, verbally attacked, or simply bullied on one or more of the social media networks you likely maintain. Some people always view themselves as above others, or, somehow, more capable than others to spot what is “wrong” with a given situation. This “wrongness” is usually defined from an elevated sense of self and/or misguided sense of entitlement. A kind of self-centeredness that is usually seen in puberty or from a sullen teenage perspective. Because of the Internet, we are experiencing a kind of hyper-awareness of bullying and taking steps to combat it. As a general movement, of course, standing up against mean, condescending people is good.

But, what can you do when you face a person, or people, like this in your real, day-to-day life?

You can learn how to spot a “hater” and how to deal with it in a healthy way. Sharing an adult, enlightened conversation crossing many opinions, complementary

and controversial, is a healthy way to explore new perspectives and embrace the differences in each other. However, some folks just can’t help but stir the pot—because they are angry, because they are feeling low, because they don’t have another avenue for expressing thought. But, even considering the First Amendment, do we have to deal with or tolerate the hateful, harassing speech of someone who’s merely talking to hear themselves talk?

Unfortunately, yes. If only because this level of bullying is a baser instinct among human beings, which falls on a spectrum. We are all capable of spewing hate speech, just think of the last time you saw an “offensive” post on Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr and how quickly you wanted to rant in response to it. How it stoked your ire, raised your blood pressure, and forced you to say something, anything about it. Your level of tendency toward bullying could be determined based on how you responded. Did you post a comment right there on the post, without extra thought or even consideration for grammar? Or, did you sit back and consider what about the post made you so angry

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Mindful Minute: Trusting SELF

One of the cornerstones of a good friendship is trust. When SELF can trust you for support, resilience, and honesty, you have taken a solid step in the direction of de-stressing, achieving peace, and going forward to make your dreams come true. It seems to be so easy to give others the benefit of the doubt and to be lenient with those we know are struggling. But, why is it so hard to turn that shining light of unconditional concern, if not love, toward SELF? Why do we feel the need to overreach when it comes to SELF doubt, SELF destruction, and SELF degradation? Why is it so easy to maintain manageable expectations for others, but to simultaneously attach near impossible standards of perfection on SELF? Give yourself a little flexibility to explore, to discover, and to fail before considering SELF untrustworthy in terms of achieving goals, acquiring peace, and living a better life!

Here are five things to remember if you have trouble trusting SELF:

- <3 iMatter!
- <3 I will make educated and empowering decisions.
- <3 Good friends are angels who walk on Earth.
- <3 I can trust in spite of liars from my past.
- <3 Always consider the source!

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and then collect your thoughts, do some research, and post a blog about it? Two very extreme responses, with a range of responses possible between them, that say a lot more about you and less about whatever you might have been responding to.

That's the thing that you have over the haters, consideration. A hater, a troll, is looking for self-glorification. They are the hecklers at comedy shows. They are simply drawing attention from the work and effort you've put forth to bring the spotlight to them.

Now, a "devil's advocate" is not the same thing as a hater. Someone who genuinely introduces another perspective that might have been forgotten or overlooked. And a "devil's advocate" is not a person being condescending, turning a tragedy back toward themselves, or belittling others with name-calling or violent harassment. That person is a hater, and they are not trying to stoke the gentle fires of stimulating conversation—unless you're willing to only talk about them.

There are a couple of ways to diffuse a hater, especially in the digital world. One is blocking a user who trolls or spews hateful language, which can put an immediate stop to the messages and comments, but they could then always make another profile. Dealing with a "hater" in real life though can be much more difficult. Sometimes, if you're working for a hater or related to one, you may have to play the game for a little while. If only to try to determine how the hater thinks and where their desire to be condescending comes from. After this, you can try to defend SELF in the hater's eyes, but this could spark a fight or confrontation that the hater will only attempt to turn against you.

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On the other hand, if your romantic partner is constantly putting you down or making you feel bad, get out. Take what you can, go anywhere else, and just get out of that relationship. You will not be able to change them and there is no level of best SELF that will stand up to a personality like that. Love is unconditional and there is no need to compare or put down when a person says they love you and means it.

However, in the face of such blatant and chronic negativity, all we have control over is being the best SELF that we can construct from our sense of self and our understanding that SELF's actions have consequences for those you may not even know yet. Especially in the digital, constant, instantaneous world of social media. Understanding that some people are negative just because they can be helps remove some of the weight abusive comments can have on SELF.

In a world now that is faster than the Indy 500, women are at the center of this whirlwind and performing many juggling acts: soccer mom, friend, wife, employee, you name it...Supermom (aka Superwoman) is at the forefront pleasing everyone but her self; with one thing in common, STRESS



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