



The Monthly **LOVE**Letter

Volume 2: Issue 1

May 2017

HARNESSING SELF'S POWER

We spent a lot of Volume One talking about the power of certain elements in our lives. Elements that we might take for granted, or completely overlook: gratitude, joy, hope, and even friendship. It got me thinking about the concept of power itself. Since the begin-

ning of time, human beings have been pursuing and worshipping external sources of power. From the sun and various deities to emperors to presidents. In an effort to garner some of that power, some of that favor, we volunteer our time, effort, and, if we're lucky, our passion to meet the needs,

guidelines, or expectations of that external power source.

So many of us wait for favor to be bestowed upon us, to be given permission by someone "above," read: better than, us, that we never truly realize the power that we have within our own lives. An example is writing a book. Even though everyone is capable of writing a book, some people would wait forever for someone else to say, "Hey, you should write a book,"

before actually setting pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard. While it will definitely help if others appreciate your writing skills (at least if selling copies is one of your goals), technically, that external validation isn't required to actually begin writing.

Have you been waiting for someone else's permission to tap into your very own inherent power?

That's the question I'm trying to answer with the first issue of our second volume. How much power is SELF giving that invisible audience or panel of judges? This month we explore how much power we can have with a positive sense of self, the power of knowledge, how powerful the fear of others' judgement can be, and the inherent power of words. Speaking of, you'll notice the regular feature "Mindful Minute" is getting an update. It will now feature a monthly mantra based on the issue's theme; much like "Mindful Minute" but with a focus on one trigger phrase instead of five. Let us know if it works for you.

In This Issue

- Harnessing SELF's Power
- Boosting SELF-Esteem
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- Mindful Moment Gets an Update
- Continue SELF's Education



"In Spite of the Fence" by MeliSwenk (2009)

Just stay focused,
 look toward the North Star,
 and keep moving forward
 Because we stand in
 sisterhood as one,
 and have your back
 -Ingrid

From poem for International Women's Day

Stencil App Image (14 April 2017, MeliSwenk) from Lovin Self blog post "Love Said It's Your Day" (8 March 2016).
 [Source: <https://lovinself.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/love-said-its-your-day/>]

BOOST SELF-ESTEEM

Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines self-esteem as "a confidence and satisfaction in oneself," providing "self-respect" and "self-conceit" as alternate phrases to supplement the definition. While we explored maintaining confidence in the sixth issue (October 2016), self-esteem and confidence are often pursued in different ways. Often, boosting confidence is seen as a temporary, or fleeting, need—for example, boosting confidence to speak in public, accept an award, or do well in a job interview. Whereas, self-esteem has a longer-term connotation, as a feeling you have in SELF over time. We also discussed befriending self in the fourth issue (August 2016); and while building self-esteem could be considered building a friendship with SELF, I want to focus on the word "satisfaction" for this article.

Have you felt dissatisfied not only with your life, but with yourself recently? Did your inner response just now sound something like this: *Yes, and I know there's no one else to blame but myself, of course. So, how could I ever even be friends with myself, let alone like myself enough to reduce stress and feel better overall? Is it even possible to like someone who sabotages me so ruthlessly?*

Any of that sound familiar?

Human beings are taught from a young age that we have expectations to meet and that it's a super good thing to meet those expectations well, with as few mistakes as possible. When we achieve these goals, especially enough to receive external accolades from the people around us—whether or not we love or even know them—then, and for some of us *only*

then, can we even consider liking SELF—let alone being nice to SELF or taking care of SELF.

This is not how self-esteem should work. Even when you fail, even when you succeed, and even when SELF is struck by a life event over which you have no control, you need love, a sense of belonging, and a tendency toward self-care that is not conditional on how well you do, how many likes you get on Facebook, or how much money you have in the bank. When it feels like the whole world is bearing down on your shoulders, the one thing you need is a positive sense of self in order to face and ultimately overcome the real obstacles you'll face on your path to achieving your dream.

Here are five ways to boost SELF-esteem:

- ◇ **Recognize perfectionism and misplaced guilt.** When you can tell the difference between pursuing "perfection" and achieving realistic goals, you are taking one step closer to having better self-esteem. Unachieved perfection can often lead to feelings of guilt. When guilt is triggered, ask SELF where this feeling is coming from and try to determine if the guilt is appropriate or misplaced. Misplaced guilt can be stopped by reminding yourself that you're only human and the world will not come to an end if, or when, you make a mistake.
- ◇ **Remember to manage negative self-talk.** A big part of esteem is how you talk to SELF, and how SELF talks back. The conversation you maintain with SELF, the running inner dialogue that can take the forms of "what if,"

"but if I don't," and "I knew better" is noise with a very handy volume button. If you're not managing the negative self-talk that can happen, that means negative self-talk is managing you.

- ◇ **Practice unconditional love of SELF.** It can be so hard to remember that just the act of surviving, on some days, can mean you are doing the very best that you can do. It is healthier when a person tries not to attach self-esteem to achievement. Even if you make a mistake, or "upset" someone else, you are still worthy of love, respect, and the good things in life—whatever you think those things are.
- ◇ **Let go of the "fraud" mindset.** If you are a good person, doing good in others' lives, you aren't an imposter. You aren't a fraud. Every step you take away from living in the fear of "being found out" and toward pursuing your passion with all your heart will definitely boost your self-esteem!
- ◇ **Take a hands-on approach.** Both literally and figuratively. Your self-esteem is your business and yours alone. Only you can determine how much you like SELF. Taking a hands-on approach means asking SELF serious and thoughtful questions about your work, your relationships, and your personality. Do you like the answers? When you get answers from others about SELF, do you like what you hear? If not, only SELF has the power to change it.

Source: Greenberg, M. 2016. *The Stress-Proof Brain*. "Learning Self-Compassion." Promotional sample. Ch. 6, pp. 121-38.

WHAT IS SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER?

There is no more powerful motivator than fear. Some may argue that anger or happiness could compete, but time and again it is being proved that fear drives us harder than any other emotion. And, typically, out of a primal survival instinct, we rely on fear to keep us safe. However, the things that spring fear into our hearts these days are not the same things that our oldest ancestors lived in fear of. We do not share the planet with dinosaurs or mastodons anymore, but with the opportunities for public speaking and humiliation, utter defeat, and loss of a certain quality of life. It is the fear of facing these things, and most especially in public, that drive what is called Social Anxiety Disorder.

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is defined as the extreme fear of being scrutinized or judged while interacting with people or doing things in public. This disorder has a direct effect on people's daily lives—day-to-day, professional, and social alike. People living with SAD have an extreme and uncontrollable fear of meeting new people and facing potential embarrassment or humiliation when doing things where other people will see them.

Physical symptoms like excessive sweat-

ing, tremors or trembling, blushing, increased heart rate, and feelings of distress may occur when the social-phobic person is faced with situations like public speaking; meeting new people or, specifically, authority figures; moments of being the center of attention; or even an act as seemingly simple as making direct eye contact. Some people living with SAD may even feel anxiety at eating in public, where people may see them swallow or hear them chew. It's definitely clear, from this perspective, that SAD goes well beyond simply feeling shy.

Emotional distress is triggered in any public or social situation where a person will be observed or "on display," such as job interviews, first dates, making phone calls, or even someone's wedding day. The idea of facing situations like this can invoke feelings of fear, shame, and a desire to avoid the situation entirely—even if it is traditionally seen as one of joy and celebration. This is a major reason why people living with SAD are less likely to have social or romantic attachments, or pursue the kind of life where these things occur.

Currently, approximately 15 million American adults live with social anxiety, and the typical age of onset is early teens—around

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"You don't become what you want, you become what you believe."
-Oprah



Cleopatra Will Set SELF at Ease

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BUILDING EMOTIONAL MUSCLE

Continue SELF's Education

We've all heard it before: knowledge is power. What and who you know can either propel you forward or hold you back. It can be a stepping stone or an obstruction. But, what about what you don't know?

Have you heard or used the phrase: "I didn't know that I didn't know."?

Being aware of SELF's ignorance is just as important as effectively using what you do know. That awareness of ignorance can be as strong of a motivator as a lack of ignorance if SELF can embrace that awareness with a desire to change.

Some people will carry on with the mentality that "my ignorance is just as important as your intelligence." This simply smacks of laziness to me. Information—verified, fact-checked information—is available for free, more and more of it every day, on the Internet and at your local library (at least!), but people continue to choose to live in ignorance. Afraid to ask the tough questions, afraid to find the truth or the facts. Afraid that what they discover will contradict their long-standing beliefs. It is possible to hold on to SELF's beliefs, even in the face of contradicting data; it is always SELF's choice. The important thing is to keep on learning.

The elements of a "happy" life that we focused on in Volume One, like

joy, gratitude, hope, and a broader perspective, are directly affected by intentionally expanding SELF's horizons. It's so much easier to keep an open mind when you know there are multiple ways a situation could go—for good or ill.

Being able to imagine multiple scenarios gives SELF the step up to plan ahead and be proactive. Not sitting back and waiting for whatever might happen and then breaking down or stepping back from your dream because you don't experience immediate success—regardless of how SELF defines that.

Having access to new information—and being willing to go in search of it—will more than help SELF in your planning processes. And even finding contradicting data or reviews may solidify your current beliefs, your current plan of action. "Well, if so many people feel that way, they need my product, service, or message even more!"

It's all in how you collect, process, and retain or dismiss the information and resources you interact with. It's all dependent upon the mindset you carry when you begin your research. You'll need to ask SELF what you need to learn, if you're willing to hear a contradicting or "negative" opinion, and how you plan to handle that information when you find it. Again, what's important here is that you're willing to

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...ask SELF what you need to learn, if you're willing to hear a contradicting or "negative" opinion...

Social Anxiety cont'd

12 to 13 years of age. Children who are ultimately diagnosed usually manifest symptoms like clinging behavior, a short temper, or even mutism. Over 35% of socially anxious people may suffer the symptoms for as long as a decade before seeking treatment—feeling completely powerless against the anxiety most realize is irrational or out of control. They simply assume there's no way around or out from under this great weight.

Established therapy regimens include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which helps people become aware of where feelings and thoughts start, how to face them, and then how to overcome them by modifying the very thoughts, and subsequent behaviors, that currently seem to control their lives. CBT in this context will typically occur in a group setting, moving toward each person solving problems in real-life situations, and can be combined with pharmaceuticals, such as anti-anxiety medications, anti-depressants, and beta-blockers, which can hinder the physical reactions to anxiety like a racing heart, excessive sweating, and tremors.

Of course, no two people are exactly the same and so there cannot be a "one size fits all" template for treatment. If you think you might have SAD, see your doctor or a specialist and ask some honest, thoughtful questions. See which kind of treatment plan will work best for you. The treatment options above have seen success in helping to relieve these deep-seated feelings of anxiety. It's important to remember that you're not alone in this. And, asking for help in situations like this is a sign of strength and an important act of self-care.

Sources: <https://www.adaa.org>; <http://socialphobia.org>; <https://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Mindful Minute Becomes Month's Mantra

Emotions are strong. There are any number of experiences that prove this. Imagine the power of your joy when you achieve something you've busted your behind for. Imagine the power of your defeat when you don't. *That*, in sum, is power. It motivates you—to keep on going or to stop at this mountain and give up. A response and reaction to a life event is something that happens instantly—so there is no stopping SELF from feeling defeat, sadness, or anger. It is how you harness that response, how you use it, that invokes that feeling's inherent power. Remember, it is okay to feel sad, angry, and defeated; it isn't healthy, though, to wallow in these feelings once SELF realizes it's hurting more than helping. Acknowledge and embrace those negative feelings, then turn their power into positive steam to move toward achieving your dream!

Here is May's mantra; repeat it when you need to remember how to harness SELF's power.

✧ **Truly Lovin Self is Powerful.**

Hope, Joy, and Gratitude fuel SELF's true power!

Contact Us

Give us a call about product updates or find us online to experience the joy of aromatherapy and love in your life!

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SELF's Education cont'd

admit SELF doesn't have all the answers and that someone else may, even if you don't particularly like what the other person is saying.

So, keep learning. Keep reaching for that horizon. Keep your mind open to all that lies before you. Don't give up; especially when it seems like the easiest thing to do. You can see SELF through the darkness, if you just keep expanding your horizons.

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