

Life. Fun. Purpose.

With Purpose Coach Fawn Miller

Module 4.1

How Did We Get Here?!

Understanding Our Broken
Relationship with Our SELVES

***"It took me a long time not to judge myself
through someone else's eyes."***

~ Sally Field



To introduce this part of the Module, I'll start out with a personal share from my Self-Love journey...

When I was a bare-footed kiddo playing in the forest, catching frogs and building forts (yep, that was me), it never occurred to me to feel bad about myself, toward myself. I was pure, innocent (well, at least for the most part), cheerful, and I found so much joy indulging my wild imagination and letting my creativity run free. I was connected to the pure energy that we are ALL tuned into as children: the energy and freedom of limitless, awakened fascination and pure possibility.

But fairly quickly my environment began to carve and shape me like the hands of a master sculptor. The stories and structures of my surroundings began to shave away anything that did not conform to the "way things are supposed to be."

Like most children, if I wanted to be accepted and spare myself a lot of trouble, I had to follow **The Rules**. And IF, heaven forbid, I wanted to be, do, or have anything that was purely Me but not in line with some of the Powers That Be...I was corrected, warned, or punished.

Which, in Child speak translated as: my perceived value and performance rating as a tiny human is dependent upon whether or not I behave in a way that the outside world wants me to.

Which translated as: If I'm to feel good about myself or others are to feel good about me, it's because I'm conforming and/or "doing it right."

Which translated as: Approval and acceptance are conditional, both from myself and external sources. So I'd better do what I'm supposed to, even if I can't stand it or it's against my will.

Which, to a degree, taught me to trade in my unconditional love for myself for external "Self Worth" payouts: *I'm good if they say I'm good, I'm bad if they say I'm bad.*

Now, I want to be clear that in many, many ways I had a really wonderful childhood and the truth is that my parents loved and love me very much. They, like most parents, did their honest best, and I am in no way complaining or blaming or pity-fishing. What I *am* hoping to convey in sharing this is that my forced breakup with unconditional Self-Love happened unintentionally when I was very young. And I'm willing to bet that, to some degree, it did with you too.

Susanna McMahon, Ph. D., explains this really well in one of my favorite books, "The Portable Therapist", in which she provides wise and inspiring answers to the questions that people in therapy ask most. Here is her response to the question:

"Why Don't I Have Self-Esteem/Self-Love Naturally?"

"We probably would have natural Self-Esteem [and Self-Love] except that it has been rigorously trained out of us by trainers (parents, teachers, friends) who also do not have Self-Esteem. This is because our western model is concerned with power and control and achievement and we have been excellent students for all the concepts of the Weak Ego..."*

“We have learned to worry about what others think about us and to try to please those people that we want to influence. We have learned that we ourselves are not as important or as deserving as the people around us.

Furthermore, we are not even given the choice of whether we want to learn Self-Esteem and Self-Love versus the model referred to above. At a very early age, we are taught that loving ourselves is selfish and will lead to being conceited and narcissistic and that no one else will want to be around us. Our churches, our parents, our schools, are all institutions of control – control over us! All institutions need to have people who believe in them and will follow the rules. The belief that man is not good and needs to be controlled to be socialized seems to have led to the fear of allowing individuals to love themselves and to trust that they will be good when left to their own devices. The western model, by training us in the Weak Ego, is a persuasive one in that it seems to offer a manner of being able to control the feelings and behaviors of others by taking care of them and loving them more than we love ourselves. This is just not the case.

*If we cannot or choose not to love ourselves, how then can we believe that we are capable of being loved? If all our love and esteem is focused on others, how can we then feel whole and complete and loved within ourselves? And, if we feel bad about ourselves, how can we then be the best we can be? No one can be at their optimum when they feel bad. Finally, if we are following the model and loving others more than we love ourselves and yet we are not getting back from them what we are giving, how can we not feel cheated or resentful? When we expect others to love us and take care of our needs, we are placing a burden upon them that they cannot fulfill. **No one else is going to know exactly what we need at the very moment we need it! No one else is ever going to be able to love us exactly as we want to be loved! No one else is going to do for us what we can and need to do for ourselves!**”*

**Weak Ego – when our worth and esteem are dependent on something outside of ourselves and, therefore, outside of our control.*

~ Susan McMahon, “The Portable Therapist”

Another helpful explanation of why and how we become separated from our Self-Love is described by Don Miguel Ruiz in his book “The 4 Agreements”:

“To be alive is the biggest fear humans have. Death is not the biggest fear we have; our biggest fear is taking the risk to be alive — the risk to be alive and express what we really are.

Just being yourself is the biggest fear of humans. We have learned to live our lives trying to satisfy other people's demands. We have learned to live by other people's points of view because of the fear of not being accepted and of not being good enough for someone else.

During the process of domestication, we form an image of what perfection is in order to try to be good enough. We create an image of how we should be in order to be accepted by everybody. We especially try to please the ones who love us, like Mom and Dad, big brothers and sisters, the priests and the teacher. Trying to be good enough for them, we create an image of perfection, but we don't fit this image. We create this image, but this image is not real. We are never going to be perfect from this point of view. Never!

Not being perfect, we reject ourselves. And the level of self-rejection depends upon how effective the adults were in breaking our integrity.

We know we are not what we believe we are supposed to be and so we feel false, frustrated, and dishonest. We try to hide ourselves and we pretend to be what we are not. The result is that we feel inauthentic and wear social masks to keep others from noticing this. We are so afraid that somebody else will notice that we are not what we pretend to be. We judge others according to our image of perfection as well, and naturally, they fall short of our expectations. We dishonor ourselves just to please other people.

We have the need to be accepted and to be loved by others, but we cannot accept and love ourselves...”

“The more self-love we have, the less we will experience self-abuse. Self-abuse comes from self-rejection, and self-rejection comes from having an image of what it means to be perfect and never measuring up to that ideal. Our image of perfection is the reason we reject ourselves; it is why we don't accept ourselves the way we are, and why we don't accept others the way they are.

*There are thousands of agreements you have made with yourself, with other people, with your dream of life, with God, with society, with your parents, with your spouse, with your children. **But the most important agreements are the ones you made with yourself. In these agreements, you tell yourself who you are, what you feel, what you believe, and how to behave. The result is what you call your personality. In these agreements, you say, "This is what I am. This is what I believe. I can do certain things and some things I cannot do. This is reality, that is fantasy; this is possible, that is impossible."***

*One single agreement is not such a problem, but we have many agreements that make us suffer, that make us fail in life. **If you want to live a life of joy and fulfillment, you have to find the courage to break those agreements that are fear-based and claim your personal power.***

If we can see it is our agreements which rule our lives, and we don't like the dream of our life, we need to change the agreements. Each time you break an agreement, all the power you used to create it returns to you. If you adopt these four new agreements, they will create enough personal power for you to change the entire system of your old agreements.”

~ Don Miguel Ruiz, “The Four Agreements”

(which was assigned reading for Modules 1 and 2)

Ok, so now Darling, for the sake of our True Selves and our Inner Children, it's time to come home to Self-Love, Self-Esteem, and Self-Compassion!

SO...WHAT IS "SELF-LOVE"?

Self-Love IS:

- Consistently relating and behaving with yourself in ways that are kind, supportive, compassionate, healthy, constructive, accepting, forgiving, and nurturing.
- Treating yourself as you do your most adored friends, your precious pets, your children, parents, or any part of life that inspires within you a welling-up of positivity, reverence, and gratitude.
- Doing your best to do your best and being here for yourself through hell or high water, and treating yourself fairly.
- A way of being, a practice, and an unconditional commitment.
- Embracing and celebrating your imperfect human nature.
- The key to living your fullest, most radiant, authentic and boundless life.
- Believing that you are worthy of being alive, of having your needs met, of being happy and healthy and fulfilled.
- Self-Love is your birthright.

Self-Love is NOT:

- An inflated Ego, a feeling of superiority or an exaggerated sense of self-importance or feeling 'above' / better than other people
- Identification with success, material possessions, intelligence, accomplishments, status, or appearance
- Successfully following the "Brules"
- A belief, reward, or occasional perk
- Conditional or dependent upon your actions or behaviors
- Optional if you want to live your best life

WHY IS SELF LOVE SO IMPORTANT?

Self-Love connects us with our True Essence and our Consciousness, the elemental focal point of our being that emanates out into the world.

(Lol, that's a little wordy, but I like it. I'll try a different angle.)

In the same way that plants need light, fish need water, and baby mammals need their mother's milk, we need Self-Love. It is fundamental to our healthy development and continued growth – and is necessary for a life of strength, courage, wisdom, and purpose. Just as we need food, water, sleep, and shelter to live *physically*, we need Self-Love in order to sustain and grow in ALL ways: mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. When we water our life's garden in the fertile soil of Self-Love, Self-Esteem, and Self-Compassion, we experience the inner and outer blooming of our boundless potential.

WHAT IS “SELF-ESTEEM”?

At this point, you might be wondering: “What's the difference between “Self-Love” and “Self-Esteem”?!” To be honest, there's a lot of overlap – in many ways SL and SE are one and the same and Self-Love certainly includes having healthy Self-Esteem. That being said, SE has its own realm of research, information, and specific distinctions, and because I believe that it will be helpful for you to have a clearer context and better understanding of Self-Esteem, I'm going to share some of the most helpful info here.



I'll start with another terrific explanation by Susanna McMahon from "The Portable Therapist":

"What is Self-Esteem?"

*"There are many definitions of Self-Esteem and what they all have in common is the concept of esteeming yourself. **This translates to loving yourself, respecting yourself, putting yourself first, and meeting your own needs. Self-Esteem is the placement of yourself in very high regard. This means that you not only love yourself but that you act lovingly toward yourself at all times.** The best and simplest way to think of having Self-Esteem is to imagine that you love someone very much, that you are always pleased to see them and to talk with them, that spending time with this person is what you most want to be doing, that you think of them lovingly and try to do things to please them. Your beloved is the most important person in the world to you and you will do anything and everything so that they know this. **Now put yourself in the role of the beloved and act exactly the same way toward yourself. This is Self-Esteem.***

*Loving yourself and taking care of yourself are the exact opposites of what we have been taught to think and do. **We have been trained to esteem others and/or external variables and to measure our self-worth by what we have or by how much we are loved. This is the definition of the Weak Ego: our worth and esteem are dependent on something outside of ourselves, and, therefore, outside our control.** When we feel that our esteem is based on having someone else love us, or having the right job, or making enough money, or being "successful," we are putting ourselves at high risk for insecurity and eventual feelings of failure. All things external to the self are temporary. They are not ours and we cannot keep them. Therefore, when we entrust our feelings about ourselves to these external variables, when we feel esteemed because we are loved or in the right place at the right time, what happens when things change and we lose our loved ones or change our jobs? Our feelings of esteem for ourselves go with the externals that are leaving us. And we are left feeling abandoned and depressed and without worth. This is crazy even though it is the "normal" way of being. Everything changes! Why risk our esteem to something out of our control?"*

“Remember...we can only control our feelings about ourselves and our behaviors based on our feelings. If we choose to love ourselves and behave lovingly toward ourselves, if we choose to have Self-Esteem, then we have control over ourselves. We do not have to risk losing our own esteem.

The true test of Self-Esteem is to have everything go wrong for us, to have this crazy world turn upside down and to lose all the things we value, and to still love ourselves and to know that we are loved. To treat ourselves in the most gentle, nurturing, loving way when we are in difficulty or pain just as we would treat another person who is hurting – this is practicing and having Self-Esteem.”

I love Susanna’s description of Self-Esteem and its importance, and I’ll be unpacking Self-Esteem a little bit more by share more on this topic from one of the top Self-Esteem Experts in the field, Nathaniel Branden, in the next workbook.

I hope you’re beginning to see that the condition of your Self-Love and Self-Esteem have been harmed *not* because you aren’t capable of having them, but because of the way that you have been conditioned and programmed. Up until this moment, or until you ‘wake up’ to this information, you probably didn’t know any better. Said another way, it’s not your fault.

Jen Sincero drives this home oh-so-eloquently in chapter 1 of her book “You Are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life” (which will be assigned reading for the next module):

“It’s not your fault that you’re fucked up. It’s your fault if you stay fucked up, but the foundation of your fuckedupedness is something that’s been passed down through generations of your family... assisted by society at large. From the moment you could take it in, they started filling you up with a lifetime’s worth of beliefs, many of which have nothing to do with who you actually are or what is necessarily true.”

SHAME

One of the Queen Gremlins that has separated us from our Self-Love, Self-Esteem, and Self-Compassion is **SHAME**. Up until the past couple of decades, shame hasn't really been understood, researched, or addressed – and yet it's an experience that we **ALL** go through, *often* and we have all been negatively affected by Shame in very negative ways.

Thankfully, in the past 15 years, the topic and study of shame has been brought to light by Brené Brown, an incredible Research Professor at the University of Houston. Her findings have transformed how we understand shame, courage, vulnerability, and authenticity, and I will be referring to her work A LOT throughout the rest of this program, which is why I have assigned her book “The Gifts of Imperfection” for this Module. Please set aside time for the next couple of weeks to dive into her book, take notes, and reflect on how the insights apply to your own life.

To summarize Shame and its effects on our wellbeing and how it's related to Self-Love, I'll quote Brené Directly:

“I define shame as the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection. When we experience shame we feel trapped, powerless and isolated.

*Shame is used as a change agent [aka a way to get people to change or do what others want them to] all the time. It's used in our society because you can actually see a swift behavior change when you use shame. The consequences, however, are very serious. **Shame promotes change by using fear of rejection, fear of not being accepted and fear of disconnection.** Ultimately, shame is very destructive to both the person doing the shaming and the person being shamed. When you talk to 200 women about shame (and now some men as well), you quickly learn how many of our deepest scars are from being shamed and many of our most profound regrets can be traced back to experiences when we shamed others...”*

“...The effects of shame begin in childhood, and the problem is that the messages we send to the child are often messages that can follow the child for a lifetime. Shaming is not like “guilting.” Guilt says: “you’ve done something bad” or “you’ve made a bad choice.” Shame says: “you are bad.” There is a big difference between “you made a mistake” and “you are a mistake.” Guilt can often inspire us to change a behavior, make amends, apologize or rethink our priorities. When we feel shame, our self-worth is so low that there is little possibility for change. Harriet Lerner writes, “How do we apologize for something we are rather than something we did?” Additionally, the “residual effect” is more accurately a “decaying effect.” When we repeatedly use shame to change people, their self-worth and self-confidence can slowly erode.

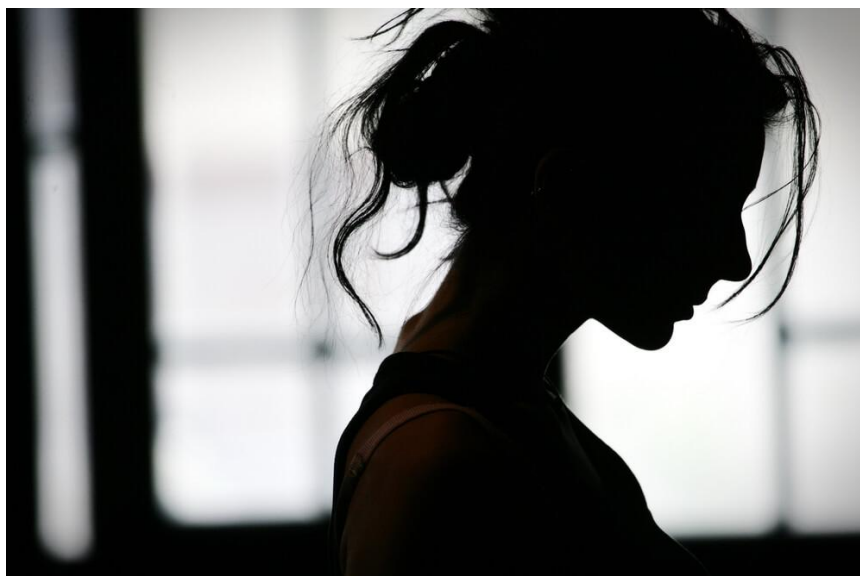
*Given how shame often makes us feel trapped, powerless and isolated, it does not make sense to think of shame as an effective agent for positive, lasting change. **Meaningful, healthy change requires us to assess both our strengths and limitations. We change from a place of self-worth, not a place of shame, powerlessness, and isolation. Real change requires awareness, insight and thoughtful decision-making – these are rarely present when we are experiencing shame.***

~ Brené Brown

from

“The Gifts of Imperfection”

+ Excerpted from an Interview with www.mothersmovement.org



As you can see, shame is at the very core of our separation from SL, SE, and SC. You will be learning much more about shame and Brené's TED talks and books, which you'll find in the Resources Workbook.

It is my hope that by understanding what shame is, how it affects you, and what you can do to reduce its damaging effects in your life, the relationship that you have with YOU will begin to bloom and blossom.

So now that we know how we've become so separated from Self-Love, Self-Esteem, and Self-Compassion, It's time to let the Lovelight back in! Let's dive into what we can do to let go of the old, harmful programming and embrace new beliefs and behaviors that will help create the Loving, Esteemed, Compassionate, "Hell YES!" Life that we are here to live!

Please move on to the "Cultivating Self-Love, Self-Esteem, and Self-Compassion" workbook where you will learn life-changing tools that will help you transform your relationship with YOU!



***"She remembered who she was
and the game changed."***

~ Lalah Delia