



^xJournal
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**SELF-LOVE
KIT**

Jen MORRIS

www.journalwild.com

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introduction

What is self love?

Philosopher and psychologist Erich Fromm proposed that before a person can truly love someone else, they must first love themselves. He suggested that self love is an act of caring for, respecting and knowing yourself. Unlike arrogance or conceit, which often stem from insecurity and fear, self love is an acceptance of yourself.

I believe that self love is a kind and gentle approach to yourself, treating yourself as you would a close friend or loved one. That means holding off on the self criticism, which is all too prevalent in our culture, and instead being accepting and loving. You become your own best friend, essentially, when you practice self love.

This doesn't mean that you don't want to grow or change. It is possible to be loving and accepting towards yourself while also working towards changing or improving yourself. Some people fear that in loving and accepting themselves, they are essentially resigning themselves to just staying as they are, but this isn't the case. In fact, it is only from a place of love and acceptance that true positive change can be realised.

Self love isn't just an acceptance of your physical self—although that can play a big part in it. It also includes an acceptance and even celebration of your personality, including your likes and dislikes, your skills and abilities, your quirks and other traits. In this guide we will be looking at self acceptance and self love of both your physical and non-physical self.

Why do we need self love?

Firstly, being able to truly feel that you love and accept yourself is a gift. It brings great joy and peace. It enables you to feel like you are supported and loved, something people tend to seek from outside sources. When you can provide this feeling for yourself, it makes you less vulnerable to being badly hurt by others. It gives you a sense of strength and a certain resilience to overcome difficulties.

Fromm's idea that you must first love yourself in order to love another is something I've heard many times before. It took me a while to fully understand the meaning of this, but I now wholeheartedly believe this is true. In order to love someone purely, that is, without fear or neediness, you need to be secure and at peace with yourself. That way you can be sure that your desire to be with them and have them in your life doesn't come in any way from fear of being alone or wanting reassurance that you are ok. Not only that, but in order to truly connect with someone (a lover or a friend) and have an intimate and deep relationship, you have to be vulnerable and share your whole self. It

can be very difficult to let someone truly see you if you are afraid or ashamed to show them parts of yourself.

Cultivating a practice of self love is more important now than ever. There exist entire industries designed to make you feel small, worthless and like you are not enough. You are bombarded at every conceivable opportunity by advertising or other forms of media presenting idealised versions of people. If you're not careful it can become a daily battle to simply look in the mirror without finding something to dislike about yourself.

Not only that, it is all too easy to compare your life to those of friends, family or acquaintances through social media. We live in an age where everything is on display—usually only the best and most beautiful handpicked moments. In comparison, you may start to feel that your life/relationship/career/home (and so on) are not good enough. You start to feel that *you* are not good enough.

It takes a deliberate and conscious effort in the face of all these polished and perfected lives to really be ok with yourself—to accept, even cherish, the person you are, despite your imperfections.

What gets in the way of self love?

There are so many things that can get in the way of truly loving and embracing yourself as you are. Firstly, the media mentioned above is a constant reminder that you are 'not enough'. It teaches you to look out for flaws and imperfections—blemishes, wobbles, wrinkles, dimples—anything that could indicate how 'unlovable' you are.

Your past can influence you—perhaps you have had people tell you that you are not good enough, that you are too fat, too tall, too loud, too stupid, too naive, too immature, too dull... Any number of things. You may have had a teacher who once pointed out something you are not good at. You may have had an embarrassing incident, a friendship turned sour, an unsupportive parent, a damaging romantic relationship. Or maybe in your house growing up you were taught to be modest and put your needs last. There are many things that could have happened in your past to make you feel small or teach you that self love is not important.

One of the greatest enemies to self love is something I have battled with for years: perfectionism. I think the media images and social media comparisons make this worse. It can be hard to accept and just be ok with your imperfections when there is a seemingly perfect world out there and a little voice inside telling you that you could be doing things better, that you just need to try harder, that you can perfect things. While on the surface this can seem like a productive trait—surely striving for excellence is a good thing— it actually comes from a place of fear, lack and a desire for control. It stops you appreciating the things you have, and forces you to search outside for satisfaction.

While it might seem that the opposite of love is hate, in fact the opposite of love is fear. This is especially true when we look at the opposite of self love: self loathing. Self loathing comes from a place of fear: fear that we are not enough, that we are flawed and unlovable. Deeply rooted fear can stop us from developing self love, because we are afraid that if we choose to love and accept ourselves as we are in our flawed and imperfect state, then we won't change and we will remain unlovable. This could not be further from the truth.

Each and every one of us is flawed. Yes, even that seemingly perfect person you know with the great career and perfect house and amazing partner and fantastic body—they are flawed too. No amount of self loathing will allow you to become the perfect person you dream of being, because that is a fantasy. You can certainly strive to improve yourself and your life, but without accepting and loving who you are along the journey, you are signing yourself up for a miserable ride. Not only that, but all the changes you do make will most likely be short-lived because you are striving for them from a place of fear and lack. When you can honestly love yourself as you move towards the things you desire, change becomes a positive experience that is driven by love. You are making changes to look after and grow yourself, rather than fix yourself.

How can we get more?

The good news is that you can create a self love practice to cultivate and grow your appreciation and love for yourself. There are simple things you can do every day to demonstrate love for yourself and transform your relationships with yourself.

I have found journaling to be an immensely important tool in developing self love. I have learnt so much about myself from journaling and essentially developed a relationship with myself. Through journaling I write down my fears and dreams, my worries, questions, doubts and disappointments. As I write I am able to step outside of myself, in a sense, and this allows me to treat myself like a friend. My journal has taught me to be kind and gentle with myself. Writing in my journal serves to remind me that I am always doing the best I can. It allows me to cheer myself on, encourage myself during times of doubt, and celebrate without holding back when I achieve something.

Journaling is certainly not the only way to develop self love, and we will explore some other self love practices you can develop later, but maintaining a regular journaling practice has been one of the most powerful ways I have found to deepen and strengthen my relationship with myself.

In this guide I share some of the journal prompts and other techniques I have used to develop a deep sense of love and acceptance towards myself. It is my hope that these will help you on your path to self love too.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

Let's start with the basics. Before we can delve below the surface we need to get an idea of who you are and how you see yourself. I have found that so often people don't truly know themselves—that is, what it is they value, what they are truly afraid of, what they are really capable of. The more you get to know yourself, the better you can learn to love yourself. While this is not something that can happen over night, this exercise is a good start.

Using the prompts below, describe yourself as you would to someone you are just meeting. Imagine you have to be as honest as you can—it isn't about creating a good impression or coming across a certain way—describe yourself as you truly see yourself. This may contain contradictions, embarrassing details or things you would rather not admit. That is ok. Be gentle and just write what comes to mind. If you end up saying one thing and then saying something different, that is ok. There are no wrong answers.

Describe your personality. Are you fun-loving and outgoing? Do you like to play and joke around? Do you prefer time alone or being in crowds? Do you get upset easily or does nothing really faze you? Do you like to focus on one thing or have many things to keep you challenged?

Describe your physical appearance. Be honest and use whatever words and descriptions come to mind. Notice where you are using words that are judgment based.

List your likes and dislikes:

<p>Likes:</p>	<p>Dislikes:</p>
----------------------	-------------------------

Describe your relationships with those closest to you.

What skills/talents/abilities do you have?

What are your hobbies or interests?

What are your dreams for the future?

DIALOGUE

WITH

YOURSELF

Now, choose some aspect of yourself from the previous exercise that you dislike or are bothered by (make sure it is a non-physical aspect. We will get to that shortly). You are going to use a technique called dialoguing to talk with that aspect of yourself. You may choose, for example, to speak with your sense of humour, or your level of intelligence, or your sensitivity. Choose whatever stands out to you.

You will write from the point of view of yourself, and then from the point of view of the aspect with which you are communicating. You will address the subject, then simply allow it to speak to you in response, recording whatever response comes to you. You can ask questions or just state what is on your mind.

This can seem a little silly at first, so just go with it and see what happens. I have often been surprised by the wisdom that is revealed when I do this exercise. You may find it helpful to write your questions/statements with your dominant hand and record the answers with your non-dominant hand. Or you may choose to write in two different colours. Try not to judge what is said and just let it happen.

love YOUR BODY

When it comes to self love, one of the hardest things for women in particular is accepting and even loving our bodies. We are so often told what is wrong with the way we look that we start to believe it. It can come from the media, an innocent (or not so innocent) comment from a friend or family member, or it can develop as we age and our bodies change.

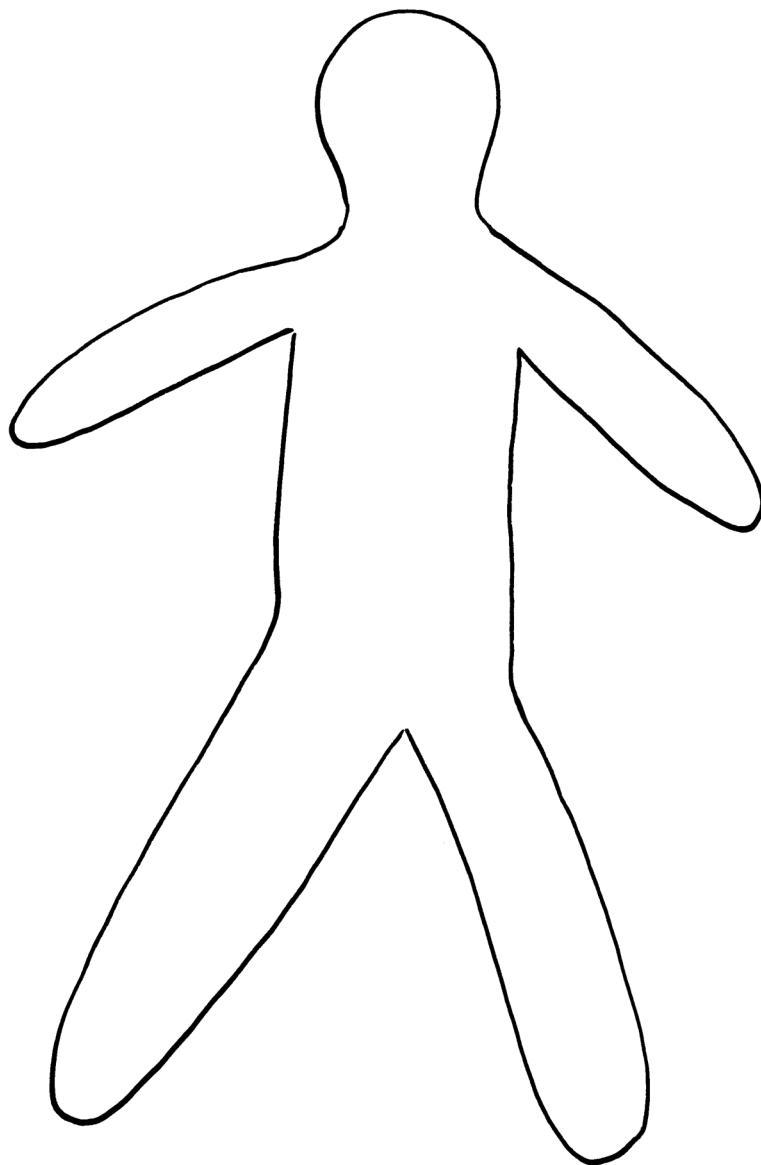
Whatever the reason, we need to start appreciating and loving our bodies as they are. This doesn't mean we should stop going to the gym or eating well—in fact, when done with love and care these can be great ways of demonstrating self love. But only when done with love, rather than to punish or fix ourselves, which is unfortunately what often happens.

In what ways do you already demonstrate self love to your body? This could include activities like exercise, eating healthy foods, eating when hungry, allowing treats on occasion, resting, getting fresh air, etc.

In what ways do you not demonstrate self love to your body? This could include over exercising, not exercising, smoking, denying yourself food when hungry, over eating, not getting enough rest, etc.

What are some new ways you could demonstrate self love to your body?

Using the outline of the body below, write or draw how you feel about the different areas of your body. For example, you may write 'strong' on the arms, or 'soft' for belly. Use whatever words come to mind, there are no wrong answers.



Now, taking a different coloured pen, draw hearts (or any other symbol of love you prefer) around the body. Surround and fill the entire page as much as you can. You can draw hearts over the words you have written, or around them. The point is not to deny the areas you are unhappy with, but rather to accept them, as they are, right now. You can love your wobbly bits and still work towards improving them, if that is your goal.

Take a moment to sit with your eyes closed and place your hands over the image above. Allow loving energy to flow through your hands onto the page. Know that you are imperfect but that you are still lovable.

dialogue WITH YOUR BODY



You are going to use the same dialogue technique from the earlier exercise to communicate with your body. You may choose to speak with a particular aspect that you are most bothered by, or you may choose to speak with your body in general. You want to check in and see what is going on, what your body needs. Sometimes our bodies can hold wisdom that we did not even know was there.

WRITE A LETTER TO YOURSELF

We all have something called an inner critic—that voice that tells us we are not good enough, or too fat, or too stupid, or whatever it is. Some of us are better at ignoring the voice while others find themselves listening and even taking on board the negativity. While it isn't possible to get rid of this voice entirely, we can certainly challenge what it says. Challenging negative thinking is one of the key steps in cognitive behavioural therapy—but you don't need a therapist to try this.

Take a moment to think about your inner critic. What kind of voice does it have? Is it the voice of that teacher who once told you that you're no good at art/music/sport/maths/whatever? Is it the bully from high school? Your parents? An old lover? Or perhaps it takes on a form that isn't as recognisable or concrete. You may like to give it a name. Whatever (or whomever) it is, you are going to write a letter to your inner critic. By placing the inner critic outside of yourself you can step back and see the things it says as they really are: false.

In this letter, you will be acting on your own behalf, defending your wonderful self and telling the inner critic whatever you want to say to it. You may choose to thank it for trying to help you, or you may choose to rant angrily about the pain it has caused you. It is up to you! Let it all out.

dear _____,

Lined writing area with 30 horizontal lines.

FORGIVE *yourself*

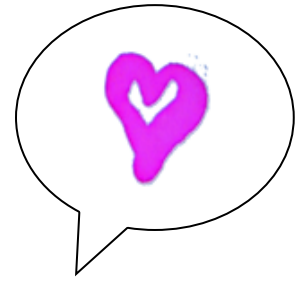


You may have noticed as you've worked through the previous prompts, that you have not been very loving towards yourself. Perhaps you have always blamed yourself for something—for being too unhappy, not good enough, too scared to do something, too nice, etc. Perhaps now you are just realising you've been too hard on yourself all along! Whatever it is, you are going to forgive yourself. There is no right or wrong answer, just go with whatever comes to you. Remember that you are always doing the best you can. Be gentle with yourself.

What do you need to forgive yourself for?

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

AS YOUR BEST FRIEND



We are going to use a technique here called altered point of view. You will describe yourself as a loved one sees you—that could be your best friend, your partner, a parent—or a fictional person. The point is to step back and describe yourself through the eyes of someone who loves you. You will write your description in the third person, using ‘she’ instead of ‘I’.

In *The New Diary*, Tristine Rainer says, ‘Writing about yourself as ‘she’ or ‘he’ rather than ‘I’ in the diary is like tracking back, back, back with a camera to give you a wide-angle view... Once ‘outside yourself’... You can observe yourself more objectively’.

Describe yourself as if you were your own best friend:

YOU ARE loved

As you have seen from the previous exercise, getting 'outside yourself' can allow you to see yourself objectively and take a step back from negative thoughts you have about yourself.

Below, you are going to write down compliments to yourself as if given to you by lots of other people. You can include real compliments you have received in the past, or you can create new ones. The point is to focus on all the wonderful things about yourself. Include both physical as well as non physical things. Place a photo or draw a picture of yourself in the centre to receive all the lovely compliments.

LOVABLE me:

DATE *yourself*

So often when we think of feeling loved, we think of how other people love us. Instead of waiting for someone else to take you out and make you feel special, set aside time to date yourself! If you're used to spending time with others more often than not, then this may feel a little strange to begin with. Persist with it, though, because you will develop a deeper sense of connection with yourself, get to know yourself better, and possibly even enjoy some things you didn't even know you would like!

Below are some of my ideas for awesome dates, without the hassle of having to get my partner on board! Just as you make time to spend with your family/friends/partner etc, try to take yourself on a self love date once a week. Make your date time sacred and don't cancel on yourself!

Self love date suggestions:

- ♥ Go to a cafe and read or write in your journal
- ♥ A trip to the art gallery or museum
- ♥ Go to the beach and relax on the sand
- ♥ Lunch in a park under the trees
- ♥ Go for a manicure/pedicure/hair cut
- ♥ A trip to the bookstore with hours free to browse and a few purchases at the end!
- ♥ Go to a dance/cooking/art class
- ♥ Take yourself to see a movie, solo
- ♥ The stay-at-home date: a few favourite movies, glass of wine and snacks (pyjamas optional)
- ♥ Go for a massage/to a spa
- ♥ Go for a hike somewhere new
- ♥ Try a restaurant you've always wanted to try
- ♥ Put on your favourite music and go for a drive somewhere new

Add your own ideas:

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

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➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

➡ _____

practice



SELF-LOVE DAILY

Self love dates are a wonderful way to spend time with ourselves, but we don't always have hours free to dedicate to ourselves. It's important to develop a daily self love practice in addition to weekly self love dates. Below are some of the ways that I practice self love each day (although not all of them every day, of course!). I hope that you will try to incorporate some of these into your day.

- 🌀 **Journaling:** I can't say this enough! Developing a daily journaling practice of even just 10 minutes can help you cultivate self love. The more you write, the more you come to see yourself as a friend; as someone who deserves love, kindness and compassion. You start to judge yourself less and accept yourself more. I write in the mornings first thing, with a cup of coffee and a few of my favourite journaling supplies (blank Moleskine journal, coloured pens, washi tape, stamps and stickers). I write freely about whatever is on my mind. Some days I don't have much to say, but this is all part of the process. This has become a part of my morning routine and an essential part of my day.
- 🌀 **Affirmations:** An affirmation is a declaration that something is true. I use affirmations during times of stress and doubt to remind me that I am supported by the universe. I like to incorporate affirmations into my journaling as a way of decorating the pages as I write. I find affirmations can really help to shift negative thinking. Sometimes I will spontaneously repeat an affirmation to myself throughout the day when I need it (silently, of course!). In matters of self love, affirmations are a great way of bringing more love and acceptance towards yourself. You can write them in your journal, stick them on the bathroom mirror or place them anywhere else you will see them often. There are some printable self love affirmations on page 28.
- 🌀 **Mirror work:** This can be as simple as saying something kind to yourself each time you pass a mirror, or it can be more of a ritual whereby you stand in front of the mirror and look into your own eyes. You may repeat affirmations while look-ing at your reflection, or you may just make peace with looking at yourself. If you are really brave, strip down naked and say loving things about your body. There is no wrong way to do mirror work, provided you are focusing on feeling positive, and accepting and loving your reflection.

- ② **Watch your thoughts:** On average, you will have between 50,000-70,000 thoughts a day. Many of those thoughts can be negative, and many can be judgmental thoughts about yourself. If you decide you want to become more self-loving, one of the best things you can do is to watch your thoughts. Try to be aware when you are having a negative thought about yourself, and rather than accepting it, try thinking/saying this: 'it's just a thought, it's not a fact'. The more you practice, the easier it will get, and gradually your negative thoughts about yourself will become less powerful and less frequent.
- ② **Choose your words carefully:** It follows that if you are going to work on having less negative thoughts about yourself, you should also be aware of when you put yourself down or criticise yourself out loud. It is so common for women to say negative things about their appearance around other women. If you receive a compliment, you might be tempted to deny it. Rather, try simply saying 'thank you'. If you have a friend who complains about her body, rather than joining in with your own body complaints, try changing the subject. You do not have to verbally criticise yourself to be accepted by other women, and if you feel that you do then you may want to consider finding new people to spend time with.
- ② **Incorporate pleasure into each day:** Make time each day to do something just for the enjoyment of it. Scheduling pleasurable activities is an important part of behavioural activation when overcoming depression, and it can be used to show yourself that you deserve to feel good. Even just the act of setting aside time specifically for you shows yourself you're worth it. Some pleasurable activities could include sitting in the sun, sipping a cup of tea, reading, journaling, having a bath, going for a walk, watching a film, napping, making art. Whatever you do, be deliberate about making time to do something just for the sake of feeling good.
- ② **Look after your body:** This topic is a bit of a minefield and really could be its own book. In my life, looking after my body as an act of self love includes three things—movement or exercise that feels good for me, eating food that is healthy but that I enjoy (including eating some food purely for pleasure) and resting when I need to. It also means avoiding, as much as possible, destructive behaviours like drinking too much, over eating, under eating, oversleeping, etc.
- ② **Say no:** This is quite simple, but not always easy. When you don't want to do something, or you feel like what is being asked of you is unreasonable or goes against your values, or you just want some time out to yourself, or any other reason, then say no. You don't need an excuse, you don't need to be rude, but you do need to be firm. Sometimes, practicing self love can look selfish and may not be of immediate benefit to those around you. But, in the long run, looking after your own needs will make you happier, a better person to be around and better able to contribute to the lives of those around you.

ABOUT THE author

The short version:

I am a life coach, writer, teacher and artist. I began journaling when I was about ten years old, and have been writing on and off since then, discovering the power of a regular creative journaling practice in the last year. I live in Auckland, New Zealand with my fiancé and puppy.



The long version:

Creative journaling is a powerful tool I have used to heal myself and my life. I have used it to manage depression, find meaning in my life, heal relationships, gain clarity and purpose, explore who I am, deepen my faith, improve my health, find courage, achieve goals and dreams, connect with others and of course, develop self love and self compassion. I am passionate about sharing the benefits of creative journaling with others in the hope that they too can experience the power of this practice.

When I was in middle school (what we call intermediate school in New Zealand) a teacher told me I would make a great writer when I was older. This was reinforced by several teachers in high school, so when I left school I went on to do a bachelor of arts in English and media studies, figuring I'd work in journalism or something similar. But when I graduated I wasn't excited about doing that, so trained as a high school teacher basically out of not knowing what else to do! I began working as an English teacher in 2009 but always felt like something was missing from my life. When I trained as a life coach shortly after and then completed a graduate diploma in psychology, I knew I had found a few of the missing pieces, but still felt I needed something more.

It wasn't until I took Susannah Conway's *Journal Your Life* course in early 2014 (for which I will be forever grateful) that I stumbled into the world of creative journaling. Finally, I felt all the pieces of my life come into alignment: the writing and language which I have always loved, the personal development and psychology side of things from my life coaching/psychology training, and the creative aspects of my personality which had actually mostly remained dormant. It turned out there was an artist hiding inside of me, just waiting for an opportunity to get out! The last piece of the puzzle for me is teaching—to share what I have learned about journaling, art journaling and creativity with others.

Thank you for downloading the Journal Wild Self Love Kit—I hope it has helped you to develop a self love practice and be more kind and gentle with yourself.

resources

Below are some of the books I have used in the making of this kit, or books that I recommend to develop a creative journaling and/or self love practice.

- ➔ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*
- ➔ Tristine Rainer, *The New Diary*
- ➔ Marlene A. Schiwy, *A Voice of Her Own*
- ➔ Sandy Grason, *Journalution*
- ➔ Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*
- ➔ Rita D. Jacobs, *The Way In*
- ➔ Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way*
- ➔ Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*
- ➔ Kathleen Adams, *Journal to the Self*
- ➔ Christina Baldwin, *One to One*
- ➔ Susannah Conway, [*Journal Your Life*](#) (online course)

YOU ARE loved

PRINTABLE

journaling cards

 I Love THAT
i'm good at:

① _____

② _____

③ _____

④ _____

⑤ _____

⑥ _____

I love using journaling cards in my journals as a way to bring in colour and variety. The often contain prompts and ideas for journaling which can add to my journaling practice. I hope these journaling cards will bring a bit of self love into your journal.

my
SELF
portrait



Decorated with pink hearts and blue dots.

things i want to
Celebrate
about me:

★ _____

★ _____

★ _____

★ _____

★ _____

★ _____

★ _____


i forgive
MYSELF
for not being
Perfect.
signed: _____

i am so grateful
for:

➔ _____

➔ _____

➔ _____

➔ _____

+++

I AM
LOVABLE
because...
 i exist

printable AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are one of my favourite ways to practice self love. I like to write them into my journal when I need reminding. I also find it helpful to have them visible around the house—in my workspace, by the mirror, next to the bed. You can use these affirmations in your journal, like journaling cards, or you can place them somewhere you will see them often—I find having them on the bedroom or bathroom mirror to be effective.

