

I Love My Life

Five-year-old Michael recently said to his mother, “I love being Michael.” She said “Do you mean you like your name? He said, “I love my life.” She asked him for more and he said, “I love school. I love soccer and I’m glad God gave me my family. I love my life.” What wisdom from a five year old. It got me thinking, how many people love their life? How lucky this five-year-old is to have such high self-esteem. Do you love your job? Do you love your life?

I recently contributed a chapter to a book called A guide to Getting It: Self Esteem. I was honored to join 11 certified life and business coaches in this collaboration. By helping each of us discover our true worth, this unique book shows us how to realize our full potential. I’m often surprised when clients hire me and they are CEO’s of large companies or partners in large law firms, but admit to a lack of self-confidence. They are successful and their fears are hidden, but it’s much more of a struggle when you have to work so hard. It reminds me of the swan who is gracefully floating across the lake, but no one knows how hard it’s kicking beneath the surface just to stay afloat. Are you kicking to stay afloat? How good it would feel not to have to work so hard.

Self-esteem is a powerful source of emotional energy that can guide us to accomplish great things and overcome significant obstacles. However, it is sometimes an elusive concept. Is it something we are born with? Is it something we develop and cultivate from our experiences and choices? Or, is it both?

After Fred Astaire’s first screen test in 1933, he received a memo from the testing director that said, “Can’t act! Slightly bald! Can dance a little.” He kept that memo over his fireplace for years. The great opera tenor Enrico Caruso’s parents wanted him to be an engineer. His teachers said he had no voice and could not sing. Beethoven was very awkward with the violin. His teacher called him hopeless. So often we are given negative messages. Fortunately for us, these three geniuses did not believe their critics. They told themselves that they had talent and proved to the world that they did.

What gives some people confidence and others so much fear about taking risks and succeeding? What is it that Astaire, Caruso, and Beethoven had that propelled them to the heights of their genius? Do you allow the voices you hear—your own and others—to influence what you become? As with

Astaire, Caruso, and Beethoven, your choice becomes your reality. You are what you think you are.

What affects your feeling of self-worth is believing that you need the acceptance and approval of others. Self worth is about respecting and accepting one’s self just as you are. Looking at one’s talents and strengths increases self-esteem, but more often, we focus on what we have been told are our shortcomings. For example, I have a client who is unhappy in his current job. He wants to take a risk and invest in a business. Fear keeps getting in the way. When I asked him what messages he is hearing that are holding him back, he thought awhile and then shared that a junior high school teacher was very critical of him. He still hears that teacher’s judgmental comments when he wants to take a risk.. I suggested he write a letter to the teacher and get his feelings out – and then destroy the letter. He wrote the letter, then sent me an e-mail saying that he couldn’t believe how hard it was to put the letter in the shredder, Part of him wanted to keep it, part of him actually wanted to mail it. He eventually shredded it and he finally felt free from the negative thoughts that held him back for over twenty years.

Sometimes we surround ourselves with critical, negative people. In order to increase our own self worth, we must learn to put ourselves in an environment that is positive. Let’s take a lesson from Michael, who happens to be my grandson. I think he would make a great coach. He might even start with his classmates in kindergarten. Let’s all learn from Michael and love being who we are.

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