

Relationship Self-Reflection

Introduction

Author and social activist, bell hooks once said, "[W]hen we can see ourselves as we truly are and accept ourselves, we build the necessary foundation for self-love." Learning to love ourselves can look like recognizing our self-worth, sitting with our trauma, examining our insecurities, revisiting our communication style, and holding ourselves accountable. However, self-love is also a journey that takes practice and patience. To be loved and in love is an action. In the end, we all deserve to experience wholesome and healthy relationships—relationships where we can openly communicate, trust one another, and express our needs, wants, and boundaries. By holding spaces of self-love and self-accountability, the essential ingredients within all relationships will bear power. Ultimately, this worksheet is a guide to reflect on our values, boundaries, and individuality. It is powerful to ponder how the interaction we carry with ourselves can impact all entities—us and the people around us. It is significant to ask ourselves these questions whether we are self-partnered or in a new or long-standing relationship. The world is changing every day, and so are we. Our boundaries and values are evolving; thus, it is vital to hold an open dialogue. Let's normalize and celebrate checking in with our needs, wants, and boundaries.



Questions

- If you had to name your greatest motivation in life, what would it be?

Motivation reflects something profoundly unique about each of us and empowers us to gain valued outcomes like new knowledge, personal growth, or a sense of purpose. How much do you value your sense of purpose?

- How important is it that the person(s) you meet aligns with your purpose?
Does my current or potential partner(s) align and support my goals, my purpose?

- How do your personal values intertwine with your political values?

- Are we embodying the politics that intersects with our core values? The personal is political; the political is personal. Some, if not most, of us recognize that political matters influence our personal livelihoods. It is one of the vital foundations that shape us and the relationships we have with others. With that, we may or may not agree with someone if they support institutions, policies, and legislation that either empowers or disempowers the people we care about.

- Do their political values need to align with mine? If not, is this something that will impact the relationship?





- How important is it for you to have your own space? What needs and boundaries do you have when it comes to your own space?
 - Boundaries are not only vital in the relationship we have with ourselves but with others too. In any partnership, we need to nurture and sustain our individuality. We can love someone, but with boundaries. As human beings, it is normal to have some space.
 - How important is it that all parties are respectful of each other's spaces? What are my needs in a relationship? Does my current or potential partner respect my boundaries?

- How often are you open with your feelings?
 - Open and honest communication is the foundation of a healthy relationship. Emotional maturity is one of the hallmarks of love. How important is it that the person(s) you meet is open and communicative with everyone's feelings?
 - How important is it that the person(s) is honest and especially upfront to share any concerns within the space? With that, can the parties commit to creating a brave and safe space when expressing their needs, wants, and boundaries?

- Do you prioritize work-school-life balance?
 - We cannot reciprocate love for others without prioritizing our needs, wants, and boundaries. In other words, before we are a pair or party, we are an individual. We have priorities such as family, friends, work, self-care, etc. How will we navigate to create space with ourselves and our partner(s)?
 - How important is it that your partner(s) recognizes the different priorities and schedules in your life? How important is it that they respect your priorities and even empower you to focus on yourself first?

- How do you prefer to communicate?
 - Do you prefer speaking over text, phone calls, and/or social media?
 - What are the barriers that might arise if a person has a different communication style than you? How will you navigate through the challenge? How will you meet each other's needs?





- How do you communicate when you are upset?
 - We are all uniquely different in our own ways. Are you confrontational? Do you need space first? How will you communicate if you do?
 - How important is communication to you? How will you navigate similar and different communication styles between you and the person(s)?

- What is your love language?
 - The way you love and express love is significant and beautiful. It varies from person to person as we are all unique in our own way. There is quality time, acts of service, physical touch, receiving gifts, and words of affirmation. Which one are you?
 - How important is it for your love language(s) to align with your partner(s)? We all hold different needs and wants— how can we support each other even if they are different?
 - Tender side notes: While everyone is different and people can place more emphasis on particular love languages over others, let's remember that we are also deserving of them all. Searching for our love language(s) is aimed to show what our needs and wants are, but more importantly, let's recenter the message that our love language should be used as a tool to promote our own self-worth.

- Do you value words of affirmation?
 - How often do you verbalize your feelings for the people you love, and including yourself? We easily give others words of encouragement, but not ourselves. Why is that? We, too, are deserving of self-compassion. Give yourself the patience and love that you often pray for others.
 - How important is it that your partner(s) uplifts and empowers you through words (and including actions)? Gentle reminder: love is not just a feeling but also an action.

- Do you want to be in a relationship, or are you longing to be in a relationship?
 - Frequently, society pressures people to be in relationships, creating the notion that we are valued more if we have a partner; however, we do not have to subscribe to these rigid expectations. Having a relationship with ourselves is one of the most beautiful components in life. With that said, people can go into relationships without knowing what they want, not feeling ready, falling for people based on false expectations, over-romanticizing dating, etc. Ultimately, being with someone entails knowing we want to be with them wholeheartedly and understanding that it takes effort. If we are confused or hesitant about the person(s), let's take a moment to reflect. It is okay not to be ready or be in a relationship.



Closing

These questions aim to guide us to reflect on our values and relationship with our individual-self. They support us on how to be more compassionate, nurturing, and honest with ourselves. Loving yourself is the key to all relationships. If we can reflect, practice, and embody these fundamental values, loving ourselves and others will become a natural reflex. Everyone is deserving of wholesome and healthy relationships. Let's create a space where love is reciprocated and rooted in self-love. Don't forget that this is all a process. The journey won't be linear, and it will take heartwork. This is also a testament that love is not only a feeling but also an action. While it is important to love others, it is also vital to foster similar energy individually. What are you going to do to love yourself? Don't forget that you are deserving of tenderness and compassion. Overall, this is a worksheet guiding us to ponder on the relationship we have with ourselves. How important is it that we embody our values, needs, and boundaries? How important is it that we put them into practice? With that, when we get into a relationship, how important is it then that we continue to foster these similar values and cultivate growth with our partner(s)? The world is continually changing and evolving, and so are we. The work is ongoing; the dialogue is continuous.

