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The Search for Self-Acceptance

The Torah commands us to love, care, and respect each other, but if we don't feel the same about ourselves, is it possible to be wholehearted and genuine in love? As I've grown older, I've found myself unable to be passionate at times in my work, friendships, and relationships, and not being able to be my best self. Trying to reach my full potential and be true to myself is impossible when insecurities and a lack of self-acceptance hold me back. A struggle for myself and many others is self-growth and acceptance; this common goal of love has affected my confidence, self-worth, and relationships, but I have learned the importance of being true to myself through Judaism and community.

Just recently, I have realized the true importance of self-acceptance and confidence. I, like many others, have struggled with anxiety, and while I often know it's inhibiting me from love for myself and others, it continues to drag me down and forces me to question every thought I have, every action I take. Questions like "What's wrong with me?" and "Why can't I think normally?" often cross my mind, but in moments of clarity, I think about how insignificant my worries really are and wonder why I can't process feelings in a rational way, something I've struggled with for years. In those moments, I want to learn to be proud and confident and to change my thinking so that it is positive and loving. I want to be my truest self, which I'm able to be through support and my community.

At the Ramah in the Rockies camp, my friends and community hold me up and see me how I want to see myself, supportive and accepting, which in turn allows me to recognize that I truly am those things. A supportive Jewish community is one of the main reasons I am able to make positive adjustments to my life. For me, Ramah is a Kehillah Kedoshah (holy community). My community there helps me learn how to accept everyone, including myself and show me love through Judaism and community. Although insecurities and doubt often hold me back at home,

at camp I allow myself to be outgoing and confident, which lets me better express my love for life at home.

The Talmud tells us the cause of Rabbi Akiva's students death was the justice for their sin of "not treating one another with respect." The verse "Love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), which Rabbi Akiva declared a "great principle of the Torah," tells us to accept and care not only for our community but for strangers as well. Is it possible to give others respect and care as the Torah commands if one does not have the same respect and care for oneself? The things that we tell ourselves when faced with imperfection and failure we would likewise never say to others, but if one is to love a stranger as he loves himself, it is necessary to love and respect yourself in the same way that you would a peer. One needs a supportive community and space filled with love in order to fulfill the Torah's commandments, and this community shows me the importance of being true to oneself and finding meaning and contentedness within oneself.

Kabbala is also a Jewish view of insecurities and self, and "through the study of the Kabbala, we come to the realization that the false sense of self/ego is but a masquerade of our true and inner dynamics, our transcendent soul. The feeling we get when contemplating Kabbala is that all that exists is the Infinite" (Pinson). By studying Kabbala, it is possible to think about the universe as one and "its approach is to come from another vantage point and see things from another perspective" (Pinson). Through this, we can let go of insecurities by realizing that there is nothing but the Infinite, and instead of focusing on negatives, it is far more productive to grow and change to see the positives in life. Like my Jewish community, both overwhelm hatred with love and bring meaning and holiness into my life.

My Jewish community brings meaning into my life by showing me love and teaching me how to conquer my doubts with positivity and light. I have learned the importance of being true to myself through Judaism and community, and find significance in the Jewish ideas of growth and self-improvement. To fully love life, I must first love myself and be proud of who I've grown to be.

https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player_cdo/aid/666132/jewish/Respect.htm

https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380667/jewish/Character-Refinement-Kabbalah-Style.htm