

142. Acts of Unconditional Love

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Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

Hey, friends, welcome to the podcast we are doing today, Episode 142. The episode today is called acts of Unconditional Love. So it's February, the month of love, it's the week of the 14th. Two. And you know, we've socialized this in the United States and all over the world to be about romance and love and friendship. And so I thought it was really important to do a podcast episode about acts of unconditional love. And, you know, I'm going to start with this that, in my experience, your ability to receive or to welcome in love, and to be treated with respect by, you know, romantic relationships or friendships, or family. That, you know, your ability to do that is directly related, directly proportional to the level of love and respect you have for yourself.

When you don't treat yourself with respect, when you don't respect your boundaries, when you don't treat yourself with love, when you judge yourself, then you're going to expect that to be normal. And it's, that's what you're going to expect from other people. And so what I want to do today is talk about how to help you receive that unconditional love. So I'm gonna share a quick story with you. You all know that in life, we all go through the sort of stages, right? Stage one, we're kind of trying to find out who we are from ages zero to 10, or zero to 20. Who are we? What's my place in this world, just kind of trying to make sense of yourself. And then we go into this career phase, you know, from 20, to 40, where we're all about success and money and promotion. And then something happens usually where we have this inflection point, where we start thinking like hold on a second, like what is life about? You know, I? Should I be focusing on balancing my time at work with my time outside of work? What is fulfillment? And we started asking ourselves, these spiritual questions, spiritual and philosophical questions like, Am I happy? Or what's the purpose of any of this? Have I been living my life for myself? Or have I been living my life for others?

And, like, who am I, bear with me, I'll share how all of this comes back to unconditional love. And just a second. You know, my story, for example, was very similar to this where I had an awkward childhood and my teen years were awkward trying to make sense of who I was never feeling like I fit in feeling lonely. And eventually, you know, I started my sort of work years. And in the beginning, I had a huge focus on activism work, I would run free clinics. I did grassroots organizing work. And eventually, I went into medical school. And once I graduated med school, sort of entered the same hamster wheel that we all enter, whereas you know, genuinely ambitious person that wants to do a lot in the world. I wanted to excel, how do I how do I get promoted? How do I get promoted, work harder, work harder? And I eventually had kids. And it's interesting, I think, when you have children or have a family, because it's the thing that sort of like, gets you to question, am I spending enough time at home? And it's

interesting, because, you know, I've worked with a lot of people who are men who never had kids, and who were socialized differently. And they don't, they're not asking themselves the same balanced question.

Although, in my experience, it's shifting a lot with this with newer generations, younger generations. So, you know, for me, my inflection point came where I started asking myself this question about, like, you know, my, my sort of spiritual philosophical questions came from me. When I had a super eye-opening coaching experience, the very first time I was ever exposed to coaching many, many years ago, I remember sitting in that room and having these same questions asked, are you happy? What's the purpose of your life? Who are you? Even that simple question, who are you? I used to answer by saying all the things that I did As a physician and a mom, they're like, No, who are you? And, you know, I get emotional even thinking about that question now. And I'll ask all of you, who are you? Like, who are you at your core? And the reason why I ask who are you is that one of the very first steps in this journey of unconditional love is self-acceptance. But you can't get to a place of genuine self-acceptance. If you haven't first stopped and asked yourself, Who am I accept yourself for who you are.

All of it, all of your quirks, all of your silliness, your nuances. If you have ADHD, your neuro-diverse brain, all of it, you know, if you like to sing in the shower, except that too, if you like to wear athletic wear, all of it, you know, accept all of it. And I say that, because once you're able to accept yourself, what it does for you is it gives you this new sense of self-confidence. Because what you realize is that you have specific preferences, maybe who you are is this beautifully compassionate person who hates cilantro? Not me, because I'm Mexican, and I'm half Mexican half salad, or Enya, and I love cilantro. Maybe you don't like cilantro. But the point is that there's nothing wrong with your preference to not like cilantro. You know, and I use that as kind of an example. That's a little silly here. But the point is, before we get to a place of self-acceptance, we make it mean something is wrong with us. When there are things we don't like, we question ourselves and say, Should I like it? I mean, what's wrong with me? Because I don't like it. Maybe I should like it. And I remember before I got to my place of self-acceptance, because for me, it didn't come until you know, very recently, for a long time, I judged myself, I questioned myself, I thought I wasn't good enough.

I thought I wasn't smart enough. Man, it's wild, I went through 15 years of being a physician, a medical doctor, where I graduated from the top universities UCLA and Harvard, I was chief resident, which means I was voted by my class as the leader of our residency class by the of the doctors of that class. I went on and got promoted so quickly to be the leader of the department. And even though all that was happening, I felt like I wasn't good enough, like I wasn't smart enough. And it's just so interesting to think that, you know, it took me a long time to get to a place of really of like, true genuine self-acceptance. And what a difference it made, you know, when I stopped judging myself, when I stopped being afraid that I wasn't good enough or smart enough. And when I showed up with that level of self-acceptance, I was so confident how it showed up for me in the hospital was, you know, before when I was insecure, I'd get a really difficult diagnosis or, you know, very sick patients. And if I didn't know the answer, I would judge myself and tell myself, I don't know the answer, because I'm not good enough.

And instead of standing confidently, what I do know, and now what I realize is the same things will happen. I still get things that I don't know. And there is, there's so much that I do know now I never make it mean anything bad about me anymore. But I don't know something. I'm just like, Ah, it's so fascinating. I wonder what that is. And I realized, like, I'm able to manage sick people and save people's lives in the ER. And yeah, there's gonna be some things that are complex and complicated that I don't know. But it's not because I'm not good enough or not, because I'm not smart enough. It's just I don't know everything, and that's okay. And so that's what happens when you get to a place of self-acceptance. I had a girlfriend who you might have friends like this, too, that do this so well. She just had her preferences. And she was so she felt so secure in herself, that when we were going out to dinner, she'd be like, No thanks. I don't like to eat that or no, I'm not drinking tonight. And everybody else would be able to be swayed or peer pressured. She's like, No thanks.

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She knew what she loved. She knew what she didn't like she knew when she needed to stay in. She knew when she wanted to go out. And it never came from a place of being selfish. She was the most giving she was still the most loyal friend. If you need her there with you. She'll be there with you. If you need her to go to that restaurant with you because it means a lot to you. She's like. I don't like this food. But if that's what you want, let's do it. And that's what's so beautiful about coming from this place of self-acceptance you're come from can still love other people even though you have your preferences, but it never has to be true. judgment towards others or judgment towards yourself. Because before you get to this place of self acceptance, we end up judging ourselves a lot, you know, judging our preferences, judging the clothes that we wear the music that we listen to judging our choices of you know whether or not you stay in a super nice hotel or somewhere that's like not super nice, judging yourself, because maybe I shouldn't have stayed there, maybe I should have done this instead. And when you get to a place of self acceptance, the beauty is that you stop judging yourself, and you just love yourself in your decisions. And you're able to stop judging others.

Because your judgment for others underneath all of that is really a judgment you have for yourself. Every time you think about a judgment for others, ask yourself like, how am I holding myself to a different standard? Like how do I judge myself in this space? So try that for yourself and see what comes up from where you are. Because once you get to that place of self acceptance, so the first act of unconditional love, is self acceptance. Because when you accept yourself 100% Then you can accept others 100%. And can you imagine how beautiful that is for like somebody around you to always feel accepted by you to never feel judged by you to always know that when they're around you, it just feels so nice, because they're so nice. They're so kind. And again, it doesn't mean you agree with anyone else, it doesn't mean you condone anyone else's behavior just means you don't judge it. Because from there, what comes after that is you can offer yourself, and this is the second act, unconditional love. What do I mean by unconditional love? What I mean by that is loving yourself, no matter what happens next. No matter if you fail at something, no matter if you gain the if you gain weight that you didn't want, again, no matter if it's hard for you to lose the weight. No matter if you don't set you don't meet a goal that you set.

No matter you love yourself, no matter if you snapped at your kids. Because maybe you snapped your kids, you don't judge yourself. You don't shame yourself. You hold yourself with love. And you say, oh,

man, that was great. Well, good lesson learned, you know, I'm human. I am human. And sometimes I make mistakes. So you love yourself, no matter if you fail, no matter if you succeed, what you don't do a shame yourself, or tilt yourself. And when you're able to do that, it's really hard for other people to do that to you. You know, we think about guilt, I am leading this coaching group right now for these physician leaders. And, you know, it's not surprising to me that the concept of guilt comes up a lot, you know, you get to this place of stress or burnout because you feel so guilty if you're not overworking or if you're not doing this or doing that. And guilt for the longest time has been used as sort of a tool of manipulation. You know, they'll do it because if not, they're gonna feel guilty. I mean, maybe you were raised in a house where that was your experience? Or were you raised in a religion where it was just used that way? And it doesn't have to be at all tied to religion, it just could be the way you were raised, even if you weren't raised in a house with religion.

The point is when you no longer guilt and shame yourself, and somebody else tries to do that to you. It doesn't have that same effect. I was raised in a house with a ton of guilt, you know, and a ton of shame. And, you know, God bless my grandparents who I love, love, love to death, and respect so much. But that's just what they learned. So that's the examples that I saw growing up. And it took a lot of undoing for me, and a lot of self-acceptance and a lot of love for me to slowly start to let go of all of that of all the judgment that I had for myself, of all the guilt of all the shame. You know, it's so silly, but when of one of my current students, one of the physicians that I'm currently coaching, said that she even feels guilty buying new clothes, because I mean, should she have nice things like why should she have nice things, you know, she shouldn't use her money on that. And I 100% relate, you know, how often have you held back on giving yourself something nice, something kind something that you deserved? You know, something that you desired, you know, buying yourself like a mango or two mangoes or avocado because you didn't want to spend the money on yourself because you felt guilty. When you offer yourself unconditional love.

You can let go of all of that. And there's so much freedom in that there's so much freedom. One of the episodes I did a few weeks ago where I interviewed Natalie Gutierrez, the author of *The Pain We Carry*, I can't remember if she said that in the session. But she and I had a conversation about this, this unconditional love. And what I realized is one of the biggest forms of liberation, or reclamation, self-reclamation, is offering yourself unconditional love. When you can offer yourself the love that other people have told you, you're not worthy of that society has told you you're not worthy of because of whatever, you know, you're you haven't achieved enough, you're not beautiful enough, you're not blonde enough, whatever it is, when you can give yourself that love, you are essentially putting up the big middle finger to everyone around you telling you telling you that you weren't worth it. And even if no one's told you that directly, that is sort of what we internalize from the world that we see around us. And I guess I want to tell you that you are 100% worth it. 1,000,000% more than the other beautiful thing of accepting yourself fully and giving yourself that love is you're so willing to do things that center your well-being, you end relationships that no longer serve you, not from a place of like hate, rage, or anger. But from a place of unconditional love. Like I love myself so much. And this relationship is no longer serving me. So I'm going to end, you know, this relationship, I'm closing this relationship, you're able to save set boundaries that center your well-being again, like I love myself so much.

And I know that I'm a good person, so I'm okay saying no to that. That's not something that serves me, I'm okay saying no to something that's gonna cause me to overwork. cause me to not be present for the people that I love, you know, cause me to do things that I don't want to do. So I don't want to say yes to that. You're okay doing all of those things. So how do we do that? How do we accept ourselves? And how do we offer ourselves unconditional love? I did an entire podcast episode on self-acceptance. And I'm going to link that podcast episode in the show notes. So go check that out if you want more on specific self-acceptance. But I will tell you, you know, for the unconditional love practice, I've done a ton of podcast episodes on self-compassion. But here's one new practice that I haven't offered before.

And it's kind of simple, but it's so profound. And the practice is being on your side, to be on your side. Now, here's what I do. I learned this from one of my teachers who's brilliant. I look at myself in the mirror. And I say to myself, hi, Vanessa, I want you to know that I'm not against others, but I am for you. I'm not against others. But I am for you. Pause this podcast episode right now. Try that for yourself. And say that slowly enough and loud enough so that you can let that sink in. I'm not against others, but I am for you. And sit with whatever emotions come up for you. Because the truth is, unless you've done this intentionally, you probably have never let yourself know that you're on your side that you are for you. So try that and see what comes up for you. And taking refuge really like feeling confident and knowing that when you say you're on your side, it doesn't mean you're against others. When you say you're on your side, and that you know, it leads you to set brave boundaries. It's always coming from a place of kindness, of good-heartedness of unconditional love.

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Because that's who you are at your core. At your core. You're a kind person, you're a kind person and you can offer yourself that same kindness and that same love. And when you do you have a huge shift in not just the way you treat yourself, but the way others treat you. And it is the most beautiful thing in the world. All of a sudden you surround yourself with people who respect you and are not texting you all the time asking for questions because you've set brave boundaries and are not you know, emailing you who respect the fact that maybe you don't like cilantro, you know, they keep the cilantro outside of this the salsa just real. So try that for yourself and know that I am also on your side. You know, when you're first doing the work of asking yourself the sort of philosophical or spiritual questions of like, am I fulfilled? Or who am I anyway? You start butting up against like, wow, hold on a second, who have I been living my life for? So know that I'm on your side.

And remember, you only have This one beautiful precious life to live. Your energy in this body is only here once right now. That's it. So don't waste this time that you have with yourself, you know judging yourself or doing what you think needs to make other people happy and instead of being for you because you can choose to live a life that's for you. And you're still When you love yourself unconditionally, you're able to love others so much more. All right, sweet friends. Remember that if this stuff is resonating with you, I am here for you. You can follow me on Instagram at [vanessacalderonmd](https://www.instagram.com/vanessacalderonmd) and of course, check out the journey. [VanessaCalderonmd.com/join](https://www.vanessacalderonmd.com/join). That is my available coaching program, where I do weekly teaching weekly coaching sessions. And you get all of this stuff packaged up for you so that you can start applying it to your own life. Alright, so friends, have a wonderful week. Have a wonderful Valentine's Day sending you all so much love. Adios.

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Hey, sweet friends, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us in the journey. It's my all-inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at [Vanessa Calderon md.com](http://VanessaCalderon.md.com) forward slash join. I'll see you there.