

5: Live in the Land of Good Enough

“I was most terrified of not being enough. Not being good enough, pretty enough, skinny enough.”

—Oprah Winfrey

There’s a land that most people can only dream of. It’s a land that can be so close to us, but at times it seems so far away. It’s a land where we don’t need to be ruled by a need to be perfect or even better than we are right now. It’s a land in which worthiness is given to you—it does not have to be earned. It’s a land where people strive to be genuine, kind, and authentic, where they are accepted for who they *are*, not what they *do*. It is a land where there are no expectations on how you “should be.” It’s a land where love is in the air and peace and joy abound. It’s called the “land of good enough.”

As shown by the above quote from an April 2017 interview in *People* magazine, even one of the most successful individuals on this planet, Oprah Winfrey, has struggled to be a citizen of the land of good enough. No wonder so many of us have such a hard time getting there! If this wildly accomplished woman has felt like she was never good enough, it’s not a stretch in the least to question if most of us, without anywhere near the fame and fortune she enjoys, can ever make peace with being in that land!

The land of good enough is one that can offer you a safe harbor from competition and perfectionism. It is a place that is

forgiving and that allows flaws and mistakes without judgment. *How Good Do We Have to Be?* author Harold Kushner (1997) laments that our society encourages us to think that if you are not the best, you have failed. He shared a story from his own life in which coming in second place in a national spelling bee was almost seen as a failure. As a young child, when he placed second in the contest, he was allowed to go into the “crying room.” We can learn from this example the importance of becoming more self-accepting and less perfectionistic to prove our worth. When we can tackle this kind of all-or-nothing thinking and overcome perfectionism (the focus of the next chapter), we can embrace living in the land of good enough.

How about you? Do you think too much in terms of success or failure, looking for perfection rather than being happy with being in the “land of good enough”? If so, don’t you want to start thinking in ways that will help you rather than hurt you? Are you ready to take control of your thoughts to take control of your life?

GIVE IT A TRY

As emphasized in the introduction to this book, writing assignments provide many benefits for processing and tackling the unhealthy all-or-nothing thinking that underlies low self-esteem.

Step 1: To identify if you are thinking in extreme, all-or-nothing ways, learn to separate unhealthy from healthy thoughts with this model below. Which column more accurately reflects your thinking style in times of adversity and stress?

All-or-Nothing Thinking	Rational, Healthy Thinking
<i>It's terrible she said that!</i>	<i>I was upset when she said that.</i>
<i>I'll never get it right!</i>	<i>I am having a hard time with this assignment.</i>
<i>I'm a failure.</i>	<i>I am good enough.</i>

Step 2: Create a page in your journal or on your computer that looks like the model above, with two column headings. Under the first, write down examples of your own all-or-nothing thoughts—think of at least three examples of unhealthy thinking that leads to low self-esteem. Then, under the second column, replace those statements with healthier, more rational thoughts. Notice how extreme all-or-nothing thinking makes you a victim, whereas rational, healthy thinking is factual and self-empowering.

Step 3: On file cards follow the same format—write *All-or-Nothing Thought* on one side and *Rational, Healthy Thought* on the other. Each time a negative, self-defeating thought arises throughout your day, write it down on a separate card, then flip it over and offer a healthier alternative. This is a variation of what are known as “coping cards,” a cornerstone of major

Embrace Your Self-Worth

treatment approaches such as CBT. Carry your cards around with you to review periodically to help you develop a healthier mind-set.

Actively tackling your all-or-nothing ways of thinking will give you your best shot at loving yourself to love your life!