

## Being Open to Love

Dawn Brown

It's easy to get caught in the trap of searching for someone to love instead of realizing we must first become someone worthy of being loved. And the only way we can escape the trap is to love ourselves. That's tough because we can always find areas for personal improvement. Welcome to the human condition! That will never change. So our challenge in learning to love is to love ourselves, "warts and all." That is the only way we can be open and ready to love anyone else. That goes for *all* our relationships. I know I'm most critical of my kids when I have been critical of myself. My approach is more loving once I stop the self-criticism.

And when it comes to romantic relationships, we have a tendency to put the cart before the horse. We say, "I'll start feeling good about myself, start taking care of myself, start enjoying my life when I find someone to love me." Oh and, "I don't want to be with someone who is a 'downer' so that person needs to high sense of self-esteem, be physically fit, and have a zest for life." What's wrong with this picture!

I recently heard an interview with The View's Star Jones. She told Larry King that she had had a big, long list about what she wanted in a guy but didn't realize that *she* didn't stack up to the list herself. She did not feel worthy of the list. She realized that if she wanted someone, kind, generous, fit and healthy – well she had to be someone who was kind, generous, fit and healthy. One day she took a hard look at the list and realized she had one of two choices – "Change the list or change myself." She decided to work on herself.

So make a list of what you want in a healthy relationship. Check off the ones on the list that you are giving yourself now. You want someone who is compassionate? How compassionate are you with yourself? Looking for someone who is accepting of others? How accepting are you of others (or of yourself for that matter)? Start working on the ones on the list that you are not giving yourself. Change doesn't happen overnight. There's an ancient saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Now is a good time to start becoming the love you want!

Dawn Brown is a psychotherapist, international speaker, and author (*That Perception Thing!* and *Expert Women Who Speak...Speak Out!*). Her new book: ***Been There, Done That... Now What?*** is available in bookstores and at [www.perceptionshift.com](http://www.perceptionshift.com).