

Episode 1

Love Yourself First

Hi, I'm Rosie Bank. I want to thank you from the top, middle and bottom of my healthy heart for joining me on this first episode of Health Matters Podcast. As someone who lives and breathes the values of living a healthy lifestyle, I am thrilled to take the first step of this journey with you virtually at my side.

I chose this topic – Love Yourself First – for our first episode. Let me explain why. You can have all the goals you want when it comes to your health, your weight, your energy level, how much you exercise, and your choice for meals and snacks. You can say you want to reduce stress and live a more harmonious life. And I applaud you for having these goals. They are lofty and you are worthy of achieving them.

From my experience with myself and with my clients, the one thing that helps you move in this direction is valuing *you*. Imagine if you were an art collector. If you did not value a particular piece of art, you would not be a good steward of it. You might not ensure it. You might not protect it the way you do other pieces that you cherish. If your body were art, you would invest the time, energy, and sometimes money to honor and revere it only if you value and appreciate the way you are right now.

Because I believe that when you love and appreciate your body even before you are the size, shape, and weight that you desire, your goals are far more likely to come to fruition. Because you are busy, I know how critical it is to make adjustments that will give you the greatest return. I know you want to win, and I know you are concerned about overcoming obstacles. I know you don't want to waste your time, and that sometimes you are unsure if you can really make a difference for yourself.

I've been there. I've been so far away from anything resembling reliable good health that it seemed that I would never find my way. You will learn how I hauled myself back from the brink of a life-threatening eating disorder and devastatingly poor food choices. I experienced sheer hopelessness several decades ago when I thought that there was no road out from my misery. Stick with me on this Health Matters podcast and you will probably draw the same conclusion that I did. If I can do it, anybody can. Since I became the person who is happy, relaxed, and confident around food and nutrition every single day, you can do that too. I learned that it was essential that getting my health together meant getting my life together. Hopefully you will be inspired by what I have to teach you. Now, let's talk about you loving yourself first.

My favorite thing to do as a health coach is to work with busy professionals. These are people, perhaps like you, who need to get their bodies and their health on track. I am convinced that the more you want to achieve in your career, or the more you want to have harmony at home with your family, the more important it is to have your body support *you*. In order to be the very best you can be at work and at home, you need

- reliably good health,
- plenty of great energy and vitality,
- and a sense of peace and balance in your life.

Who can run a company with chronic exhaustion? How can you haul yourself to work every day if your joints are achy and you are hooked on caffeine? How can you give a proposal and be selected amongst your competition if you are distracted by food cravings? How can you be the best parent or spouse if you feel drained? How can you complete an important project at work if you are consumed by excess stress?

All of these situations deplete you of precious resources. I think of health challenges as business challenges. Getting sick is among the most expensive things to ever happen to you professionally. It absolutely pays to be healthy. Losing your precious well-being, can be exorbitant to your family and the people for whom you care. I don't like to teach or inspire using fear, but I gotta say. If you are doing anything to put yourself at risk, the best time to adjust your practices is right about now. God forbid that your habits move you toward something serious, when you are smart enough to avoid doing that.

As you and I connect through this podcast series, I'd love to help you turn the barge of your own health, and move in a direction where you are happier and more at peace. Why is it important that you bring your health standards up to your job or business standards? Simple. So that you can perform at your work without the undertow of exhaustion and the hovering threat of a serious illness. Your life at work and at home will reflect your health to the degree that you can make it a priority. Many of my clients learn to make it through the day without running out of energy. They report being more able to connect with their spouses and kids when they are not at work. I will show you how to do this.

The gateway strategy to begin this process is to consider how you regard yourself. Dare I ask? Do you love yourself? Do you care about yourself enough to nurture your body with plenty of rest and nutritious food? Do you think highly enough of yourself to do what it takes to maintain a healthy weight?

I'm going to tell you some actual things I have heard among very successful, busy professionals with whom I have worked. Well, I mean that they were successful at work. But regarding their ability to feel successful **personally** with regards to the state of their physical, emotional, and mental health... now that's another story.

Can you relate to any of these remarks?

1. I guess I feed my dog better than I feed myself because I love him more than I love myself.
2. Since I can't do what I used to do regarding exercise, why bother?
3. I feel guilty when I'm at work for being gone from my kids. But when I'm with them, all I can think about is how much has to get done at work.
4. I have absolutely zero time for myself.
5. I feel like I drag myself out of bed, everything hurts, and I can barely get through the day.
6. If it weren't for sugar and caffeine, I have no idea how I'd get through the day.
7. I have no expectations for a better job with all this extra weight.
8. It's impossible to keep all the balls up in the air. I'm constantly afraid that some will drop and break.

Let me guide you to shift your focus on to ways to nurture yourself. Even if it's one baby step at a time, and it often is. Sure, it would be easy for me to tell all of you stressed out busy professionals to start to

love yourself unconditionally. And wouldn't the world be a beautiful place if we all lived with inner peace and harmony all of the time? Since we can't just snap our fingers, let's consider three things.

1. Loving yourself is a process. It's not an event. Once you decide to love yourself more, there will be many layers to sort through along the way. I have been fine-tuning my ability to love myself for a very long time. Looking back, it was when I realized that it was impossible for me to move forward in life while entrenched in a nasty eating disorder. I remember thinking this: my life can either be totally destroyed, or I can set myself free. I was forced to pick because I couldn't move in two directions at the same time. So, I chose. This was many years ago. I didn't wake up, like presto change, and found myself being head over heels in love with myself. But the decision was made. That was the first step, like what I'm encouraging you to do.

The first time step you take counts. Maybe for you it's staying sober during the weekend. It's not that you are an alcoholic, but **you probably already know** that that much alcohol is damaging to your liver. Or whatever your self-destructive habit is. Hurting your body is a form of self-loathing. Taking care of your body opens your heart and begins to heal you.

2. Connect the dots: when you take better care of yourself, more doors will open up for you personally and professionally. I suspect that for some of you listening to this, you may perceive a mountain of responsibilities and a boatload of stress. However, a person who loves herself or himself, is less at risk to being overtaken by that stress. This is when self-care creates real benefit. **You can** do things that help you feel better. Getting plenty of rest and eating nutritious food are two examples. Here's the irony: by loving your body and making your health a priority, you can get more done. And I know that's important to many of you listening to Health Matters Podcast.
3. There are a few very specific things that you can begin to do to make a difference in how you regard your body, and how you take care of yourself. Just as you plan your day, your kids' schedules, your priorities at work, and perhaps your meetings with your clients, you can plan on loving yourself and your body and creating predictable results. A good place to begin is to become more mindful. This also means becoming more aware. Picture a horse who wears blinders to keep the horse from seeing beyond a certain limited perspective. What if you had blinders on? If you were to make observations about your habits and practices, what might you discover? Taking your blinders off may be uncomfortable at first. I've witnessed my clients being horrified when they tallied how many caffeinated diet sodas they actually drank during the day. The truth might hurt, but it can also set you free.
I'm going to focus for a while on a strategy that can be pivotal.

How is your self-talk? Are you your own best cheerleader and encourager? Or do you bash yourself with self-destructive thoughts and criticism? I feel so strongly that learning to be your own best friend can change everything for the good in your life. Please start to listen in on your own thoughts, so you can take that very simple step called "becoming more aware."

Let me tell you what a mantra is. It's something that we repeat over and over in our minds. Usually we associate a mantra with a spiritual chant that's often uplifting and puts us in a positive state. A beautiful mantra like this is "I am lovable. I am worthy." I love to pay attention to my very first thought in the

morning. It's a way for me to sneak up to my subconscious mind to listen in without any interruption by my conscious self. I love hearing things like, "I'm excited!" "I'm ready to tackle the day!" "Let's do this!" "I am at peace." "I am in harmony." These thoughts are beautiful mantras. When you hear yourself spontaneously whispering in your own hear with loving, life-affirming words like this, you are putting yourself on a good track.

But sometimes, you might catch yourself saying not mantras, but "**mean**-tras." These are like gremlins in your mind whose words eat away at your happiness, your good intentions, and your ability to take good care of yourself. I call them meantras because, well, they are you being mean to yourself. I'm not saying that's a wrong or bad thing to do. That would add insult to injury. I am saying that no one, including you, deserves to be beat up with unkind words that strip you of your worthiness.

Studies have been conducted in which people were told really bad things about themselves to see how people responded. This is the work of [Brené Brown](#). When individuals were shamed, or caused to feel bad about themselves, their destructive behavior got worse.

If you talk trash to you about you it will make it harder to accomplish your goals. If losing weight is one of your goals, if you have meantras that you repeat after you eat a cookie, you are at risk to eating more cookies. If you tell yourself over and over that you have no self-control, it's easy to imagine how your behavior will be affected. If you continuously remind yourself that you are fat, your body will reflect this belief.

On the other hand, if you eat a cookie, and you hear yourself reminding yourself that you are able to enjoy one small cookie and feel satisfied. Obviously you will be more empowered to stop after one cookie. If you eat one cookie, and you hear yourself celebrate your innate wisdom to take really good care of yourself, the rest of the plate of cookies no longer beckon you.

My suggestion is to listen in on your own thoughts. It might be tricky to discover how you really talk to yourself. It might be terribly uncomfortable. But doing so is essential in order for you to move forward reaping the benefits of optimal health. I want to help you move toward relief. If you are super critical of yourself, then it's harder to do the things you would do if you were more encouraging of yourself.

A technique I have used for many years is called "unfinishing thoughts". Let's say you recognize a familiar mantra that goes like this: "I hate the way I look." Thoughts like these carry a huge negative charge to them. The word love has a different vibration than the word murder. Words have energy to them. If you tell yourself that you hate the way you look, then you are literally dumping negative energy into your own being. Also, by telling yourself that you hate the way you look, you have shamed yourself into perpetuating the habits that make you look the way you look. The negative energy feeds upon itself.

Now that you recognize that thought, you can catch it the next time you think it. And when you do, cut the thought off before you finish thinking it. The next time you might be able to hear, "I hate the way..." And then listen to the new quiet space instead of to the old criticism.

And continue with this process. Each time you hear the beginning of the familiar mantra, cut off as much of it as you can. With practice, you can dissolve the entire message before it enters your consciousness.

Does this take mental discipline? You bet it does. Is it worth it? You will discover for yourself, but the answer is absolutely yes.

Back to words carrying energy. This old mantra had a vibration to it. You may not have been aware, but here's the thing. You can sense the vibration of this thought before the words enter your mind. There is a feeling in your body even before the thoughts are formulated. It might take practice for you to become that aware. It might be like a tightness in your throat. Perhaps it is a clenching of your fists. You'll have to find it for yourself, but know that your body does respond to that negativity.

This is when you want to take a huge breath, relax your body, and quiet your mind. Steer yourself in the opposite direction of that energy and vibration. You can smile, as that raises the positive energy in your body. You can imagine how good you want to feel. You can remember something you did that was life and health-enhancing. All of these work beautifully. Especially when you continue this practice. The familiar vibration in your body prior to the mantra becomes a trigger for you to tell yourself something that makes you feel good about yourself.

Imagine this: in the past, my thoughts were so contaminated with self-destruction, I suffered through self-loathing and self-criticism all day, every day. This went on for years, until I began to disentangle myself from this toxic web. It wasn't easy at first because there was so much junk in my thought process. Eating copious amounts of junk food fed the junk in my mind and vice versa. I am happy to share this with you in hopes of your having a glimmer of optimism. A little tiny thought of self-encouragement is worth noticing. It might be the size of a poppy seed, and it might be as faint as a tiny breeze outside of your window, but it's there. This first step I am describing to you is critical. You have to start somewhere.

Here's another key distinction. What if you find it difficult to get those gremlins to shut their filthy mouths? What if you discover that the negative mental chatter is louder and more constant than you had previously noticed? If that happens, listen for the quiet spaces between those thoughts. They are there. This is a form of meditation, and why I am such a huge fan of and believer in meditating. Those quiet spaces allow a level of awareness on your part that disengages you from the pestering gremlins. It's the tiny moments when you are on a holiday from mental stress and grief. You don't have to do anything or figure anything out.

I call this "looking for nothing." When I meditate in the morning, sometimes all I can do is turn down the volume and frequency of distracting thoughts. And when I am able to do this, when I can find "nothing", it feels like heaven. Peace on earth.

When you can have that momentary break from negative self-talk and allow for nothing, I bet you will find it easier to, say, have a balanced and healthy breakfast. Why? Because those quiet and peaceful moments help quell stress. It helps you feel better. And when you feel better, you are better equipped to do things to help you stay in that very state.

I started off by calling this love yourself first. Here's the thing. You don't have to wait for anything to begin to dial back your own negative self-talk. A good time to begin to encourage yourself to make healthier choices is, well, today!

Loving yourself can look like being less unkind to yourself. Let's do some math. Let's say that you discover that approximately ten times per minute you hear some undertow of a mantra. Something

that just pops in your mind that is unkind. Once you start listening in, I don't know what you will find, but let's just say ten times per minute. Progress may be as subtle as you hearing and sensing harmony and positive energy more of the time. Let's say the negative thoughts get reduced to, say, twice a minute. AH! Yea for you!

I love the concept of enshrouding our negative thoughts in positive ones. If a meantra slips in, give thanks for noticing it. I know this is completely counter-intuitive, but think about. By thanking yourself for being more aware, you have diffused the negative thought with a positive one. You can ride this positive gratitude into the next choices you make. You may find that words of encouragement will help you over your habit of drinking too much alcohol in the evening, for example. You may discover that a loving thought will help you stop eating when you are comfortably satisfied. I love to call these "atta boys" or "atta girls". Now you are *behind* yourself, let's say, to go outside for that walk rather than standing in your own way.

By switching your thoughts from criticism to encouragement, I bet you will discover that your negative thoughts were erroneous. You may have convinced yourself in the past that you are fat and don't deserve to feel and look great. But you can teach those gremlins to be silent as you practice telling yourself what a person tells herself when she tells the truth.

I may never have the good fortune of meeting you in person. But if I could, I would remind you that you don't deserve to be punished, shamed, or criticized. Have you made errors in judgment and gotten off track at times? You bet you have. Who hasn't? Does this mean that you are unworthy? Hell no! Those were simply mistakes you made. An incorrect conclusion. Have you done things to put your health and your body at risk? Perhaps. I sure did in the past. I learned what we are talking about for you now. The more serious the mistake, like gaining too much weight, the more you must love and forgive yourself. It's hard enough to love yourself unconditionally if you are 50 pounds overweight. It's challenging to not feel guilt or shame after eating a pint of ice-cream before going to bed. But you were hurting, so don't hurt yourself more. Try to say and do loving things for yourself exactly as you are.

Taking a walk with your dogs is more of a loving gesture than sitting in your car cramming down fast food. Connecting with a friend and asking each other "how can I support you?" is more nourishing than working through lunch and dinner and then stuffing yourself at 10 PM because you are starving and depleted. Unlike complaining and criticizing, telling a child or a co-worker what you appreciate about that person helps you feel better about yourself,

I am so hopeful for you. I hope you find all kinds of ways to upgrade your thoughts to be more in line with your health and weight goals. In the old days, I felt like my persistent negative self-talk made everything I did in my life so much harder. It was like a ball and chain. Like what I've been telling you, I breathed and meditated my way to a far brighter inner world. I stared down destructive thought gremlins until they retreated once and for all. This is the relief to which I refer in my book [*Health Matters*](#), and this is the relief I hope to lead **you** to enjoy.

For me, moving forward professionally, personally, and romantically back in the eating disorder days was indescribably difficult. There is no way I would be in the kind of marriage I am in now, the career I now enjoy as a Health Coach, the books I have written, and how I look and feel every day had I not replaced those gremlins with self-love and self-encouragement.

Decide for yourself that you are worth it. Even if this belief is the size of that poppy seed I mentioned. That's good enough for you to start to inch toward a brighter, more loving relationship with yourself that includes your body. What doors will open for you when you feel aligned with you, rather than opposed to you? How will your relationships unfold as you show up as the well-nourished, well-rested, energetic new version of you? Imagine your body moving toward the shape and size you desire not because you attempted some goofy or restrictive diet. But because the pounds melted away as a result of your discovery of your own worthiness.

I can't wait to meet and connect with the new you, even though we can both love you exactly as you are. We are all work in progress. Health matters. And so do you.