



Self-Love for Facilitators

3rd Thursday Assembly

Nilisha Mohapatra: Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is a wild, wonderful format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a topic on a specific question.

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!), Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" if you agree). We will have questions and case studies which we will work through together! Katie Jackson and I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted in a few days. Have fun!

This month we are discussing about **CULTIVATING A SELF-LOVE AND SELF-CARE PRACTICE FOR OURSELVES, AND HOW THAT IMPACTS US AS FACILITATORS**. I am really excited about today's discussion and cannot wait to hear your thoughts and insights!

Goals and Agreements for October 16th, 2014

GOALS:

- 1) To explore the importance of a self-love, self-care practice.
- 2) To exchange ideas and techniques for cultivating a steady practice of self-love for ourself.
- 3) To understand impact of self-love on our facilitation.
- 4) To connect, recharge and have a meaningful, fun time online.

In order to achieve the goals, here are some suggestions for agreements to make our time together flow really well. We are still experimenting with this form, so be sure to add what you need or want **AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS**.

AGREEMENTS:

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.
- 2) Share at your level; Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully disagree with each other.
- 3) Show your presence, by **LIKING** and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to **REFRESH** your browser fairly often. **LIKING IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER SINCE FACEBOOK HAS CHANGED AND WE CAN NO LONGER SEE HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE READ A POST**.

4) Answer any questions in the **COMMENTS** below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open **NEW** questions in new threads.

5) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!). Feel free to add to the discussion even after our 90-minute session is over

Nilisha Mohapatra: CHECK IN question for October 16th 2014:

Share with us one sentence of appreciation or encouragement You have given yourself in the past 24 hours.

Katie Jackson: I had to think about this for a second, which is interesting in itself, but I did remember that this morning I stopped to think about my family I congratulated myself for being calm and understanding

Nilisha: Thank you for getting us started, Katie! I love the celebratory tone of your appreciation!

I too stopped a moment to think. This morning just before the chat I appreciated myself for doing something I don't enjoy much - vacuum cleaning the carpets- and actually practicing some mindfulness while doing that. I did enjoy it after all!

Arindita Gogoi: My brother was diagnosed of a flu and I stayed back home to take care of him and take him to doctor. I suddenly realized that in the past seven years I have continuously nursed many people through diabetic pain, arthritic pain and took life changing decisions to take care of a friend who was diagnosed of MDR TB. I patted myself on my back for remaining patient throughout this process.

Naali Zahira: I can't think of anything I've said to myself in sentence format, but I have been aware of how much I have been holding and facilitating lately and the true value of it. It has definitely been consistent self-acknowledgement. I am appreciating the encouragement to make statements to myself more intentional.

Nicole Armos: I've had a lot of moments of "you made it!" With simple things like being on time....or even not on time but prepared....

Olusola Adebisi: Every day in every way I am filled with peace health wealth strength and wisdom. My daily mantra

Nilisha: Welcome, Olusola!

Shilpa Setty: It was today, I could actually be strict and helped create space for students of my batch to talk about what means a lot to them in their life. I felt somewhere I was able to get them to listen to each other!!

Nilisha: Welcome, Shilpa. Kudos for the safe space you created.

Emma-Jane Crace: hi ALL, just arrived here..since observing I have a ruminating worry monster carrying on in the recesses of my mind, it's put down a speciality, I am getting more in the practice of remembering to say "it's ok, I am here for you", cultivating the quiet champion side of self..

Nilisha: Emma-Jane, Welcome! I love how you call it the quiet champion side of self. I'm going to use that! So so powerful.

Olusola: Emma-Jane the quiet champion side of self! I'm feeling that!

Katie: Yes Emma-Jane - I know that worry monster!

Shalini Menon: 'You are really good at bringing people together'... as I organised a brunch party for coworkers & friends connecting people from diverse backgrounds!

Nilisha Mohapatra: Discussion Question #1:

What is your personal definition of self-love and self-care?

Katie Jackson: For me, it's learning to take up space as a complex and emotional human being and recognising that I am responsible for myself and for loving and looking after myself. It's making sure I have what I need before looking after others, making sure that I treat myself kindly and making sure that I ask for what I need.

Clarinda R. Laforteza: having an intimate relationship with the Lover of your soul

Naali Zahira: SL - Compassionately attending to feelings and needs that arise in me through non-judgemental acknowledgment and creative strategies.

SC - constantly checking in with myself to see where I'm at in the balance of giving and receiving and ensuring that I find ways to re-fuel daily, more often as needed.

Clarinda: in process of learning what it really means to humble oneself

Katie: On a practical level it is listening to myself without judgement and trusting my intuition

Evan McGown: To me it is a remembrance that I am a portion of God/Mystery, just like anything else, and like anything else, it/I deserves appreciation, love and being seen and cared for. And I get to be both loved and lover of same.

Nilisha: Katie - Wow! I hear that you love yourself for being capable, deserving and able! **Clarinda:** Beautifully articulated. **Naali:** I like the way you have defined the relationship between Self Love and Self Care. We will be talking about how to re-fuel, shortly.

Clarinda: intuition: inner tutor ~ someone once said to me

Evan: Remembering the "little boy/child" in me who needs the support from other parts of me, that are older, wiser, accepting loving. Checking in with this vulnerable yet brilliant part of me...protecting him, reassuring him.

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Nilisha: Evan, It is interesting that you speak about the little child in us! Love it. Maybe you can throw some light on it, in our second question?

Nicole Armos: My idea of self care is actually like Naali's of self love! Attending to the feelings and needs that arise, regardless of outside priorities. So I guess in a way that's both of them rolled in . But for my self love I would add reminding myself that I am valuable, that I am worth my own care. Noticing the good things about me

Arindita Gogoi: For me, it is the constant reminder that I am the central character of my life and if I am unhappy with myself, I'll never be able to bring happiness in anyone else's life.

Nilisha: It is fascinating to see a common thread in all these amazing responses.. Of how we all know we are worthy and wise, and how we want to nurture those pieces of us. Love how honest the responses are!

Clarinda: "home is where the heart is"...suppose self-loving is realizing that you have it in you when perhaps the journey starts to take you outside of yourself..."the Kingdom of God is within you"...then we return home

Thandile Giyama: To me, this simply means to take responsibility in loving and caring for my self. I can also describe it as putting myself before I consider others, it means to be a 'capitalism', ensuring the meeting of my needs and wants before anything else.

Nicole: ^^ and I remind myself that caring for myself is actually what allows me to care for others, and that being attentive to my subtle needs is what allows me to notice other people's unspoken needs

Clarinda: understanding our personal love languages - to speak it back to our selves - service,touch,quality time,gifts,words

Nicole: Wow I actually never thought of that Clarinda! I wonder if I have been loving myself a whole different way!

Clarinda: Forgiveness, I'm finding encompasses everything

Nilisha: Spot on Clarinda. Self Love starts with forgiveness for me. I did a forgiveness practice for a week. It helped.

Clarinda: putting into practice ~ we get better at whatever we practice

Emma-Jane Crace: Practicing acceptance of all the flaws and weaknesses I see within (whether true or not) ...and by golly its in practice..!

Shalini Menon: Forgiving oneself, being compassionate towards oneself

Shilpa Setty: For me self love is loving me for who I am with all my vulnerability, and constantly willing to become Love that truly is. Like a rock which is shaped into a statue by the artist when he takes off all the unwanted pieces.

Self care is to be gentle on myself and not blame me for everything that happens in my life, but in turn look for the learning and being thankful for it, which will in turn help me become Love.

Also, I feel being accepting and forgiving of myself helps me accept and forgive others as well.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Discussion Question #2:

What challenges our ability to be compassionate and loveable to ourselves?

Katie Jackson: So many things! I often find that the messages I am given by society encourage me to be totally selfless with no thought for the self. I think that is especially true for women at the moment. The mother figure is often seen as being someone who puts others needs before their own.

Naali Zahira: Oooo - fear of being unlovable as I am, taking the place of unshakable love for myself that is not reliant on other's love/acceptance.

Having high expectations of myself based not on where I am at and where I am going ~ with acknowledgment of the value of the process and what I am offering along the way, but rather because I am looking at the big picture and trying to be a super being who can fix it all on my own. Katie - SO vital to reverse that message, hey?

Nicole Armos: Yes Katie! The competition of voices is what gets me. One side always critiquing what I haven't done well/fully/on time/at all is always threatening the side that is just trying its best

Evan McGown: The belief that I'm responsible for more than my portion, that I have to "save" anything more than my own well-being.

Katie: Yes Naali - fear of being unlovable is such a big one I think.

Evan: I've been recently asking myself: "if the the world didn't need saving, what would I do with myself?"

Nicole: I think I also struggle with some physical challenges- skin issues, a sore back for a long time that also factor in. There have been times when my ability to love my self is hampered by how hard it is to be in a body

Naali: Evan - Thank you for that question! I'm going to spend some time with that one!

Katie: Sometimes people have a desire to be liked and approved of so they spend a lot of time trying to please, but there is a lack of acknowledgement that self approval is the most vital approval of all. I'm often guilty of that!

Evan: Katie, yes, I totally agree - self-approval is at the heart of this...or actually Self-approval...which the capital S.

Katie: Also, there are the social masks we all adopt to try to fit in - these often stop us from being true to ourselves.

Nilisha: I agree with you Katie. I think when we seek approval from others, we forget ourselves.

Evan: "seeing" ourselves so that we don't expect others to do this for us...especially important for us to stay "clean" as facilitators of others' unfoldings

Katie: Oo - interesting that you mention being a facilitator Evan - all of the things above would really interrupt the flow of group work. I've never really seen then written out before, but it's so clear to me that you can't lead a group to empower themselves if you are not feeling empowered yourself.

Evan: I think this is why some evangelical Christian groups get many members: the message is "you are seen, loved and accepted just as you are by a higher power." I believe we each long for this...and it's up to each of us to discover it

Nilisha: I always feel what limits my ability to love myself is that I feel I don't deserve it. Evan, I see what you mean now

Arindita Gogoi: I have had moments in my life when I dedicated myself to other people (say, a partner) and I made his needs as mine and his dreams as mine too and it was beginning to frustrate me because I completely lost myself and my individuality in the process. I kept on thinking, my time will come and I will be able to get back. But we forget that care giving, loving some else, loving oneself and self care are simultaneous processes and they all need to be nurtured together so that true harmony prevails and happiness and satisfaction prevails.

Evan: Yes, I feel you Nilisha, I think the seeing of our deservingness may be a prerequisite to the administering of true love and care?

Nilisha: Possibly. To tell ourselves that we deserve care and compassion, and we can give it to ourselves because we know what exactly we need! This is such an enriching discussion here! It made me want to ask question #3! Refresh your browsers to find it

Arindita: And I totally agree with Evan and Katie that as facilitators we cannot lead a group or help others reflecting on activities if we don't feel empowered ourselves. One of the key things I concentrate while training my team of facilitators is to help them focus on their own growth and I know rest will just follow.

Katie: I am interested though - when is it appropriate to be selfless? Sometimes it seems like a good thing to do. For example, giving up your seat on the bus. I am interested in where that boundary is.

Naali: Evan - I REALLY like what you said about needing to be seen by others when we are not seeing ourselves.

Nicole: Actually that's another thing for me! Not expecting others (for example, my partner) to magically know what I need and provide me with that.....and instead realizing that I know exactly what I need like you say Nilisha and trusting that I can give it to myself the best

Nilisha: I love your question, Katie. Makes me think about the boundaries I need to take care of myself.

Evan: Nilisha, here's a comment on the child for this question. For me, there's this part of me that I could call my "inner child" - it's vulnerable, spontaneous, and needing of love and attention. If I don't give it that, through ritual or affirmations or active imagination/dialogue, etc. - then it "acts out" to get needs met outside of itself. As a facilitator, this shows up in getting the group to like me, or trying too hard to be clever, etc. The intention of empowerment of others gets usurped by this unconscious "possession" by the unmet needs of the inner child. And then I feel upset with myself for doing this...which reinforces the negative self-talk and does a sort of "chastising" of the inner child which means he's more hurt and will act out more again...or just feel defeated and stop.

Arindita: Katie I think the boundary lies within us; if we are discomforted too much with something that is meant to be selfless, then it is better to apologize and get out of it than reaching to a level when it might not remain selfless any more, and it starts being a burden. I had to request my sick partner to call for a nurse so that I don't reach a stage where I became impatient and in any way deceitful towards him.

Evan: So to the question...what keeps me from loving myself is an ignoring ignorance of that inner child and his needs.

Clarinda R. Laforteza: ?Compassion: investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others ~ how compassionate am I? inner healing to be prioritized

Nilisha: Ooo that is a great approach to understanding our needs - The Inner Child. Thanks for the detailed explanation Evan! I think you've hit the nail in the head here. That what challenges our ability to love ourselves is our conditioning. Which goes back to what Katie said in the beginning.

Clarinda: self-perception

Katie: Yes Nicole Such a big thing. Not expecting others to guess what you need and supply it

Tavi Baker: focusing outward to the extent that I forget I have needs, feelings, and a body to pay attention to as well!

Clarinda: experiential love

Katie: Ah - yes Arindita, that's really interesting. so it is making sure you never feel disempowered through being giving? I like that

Evan: Yes...like RIGHT NOW for instance. I catch myself wondering, "who's going to like my comment." So right now, I stop, and check in with the Inner Child...what are you needing? To know that my ideas are good and valid. Yes, they are brilliant! I really like you, no matter what anyone else says...inevitably someone will disagree with you, and that's okay. Really? (the child says). Really. And even then, you're okay because I got you, I love you, I see you, and I LIKE YOU, even if no one else does. But of course, others do see you and like you, too. And the child relaxes and goes back to its happy, playful, creative self. Breathing deepens, body softens

Evan: Arindita, I love that you called for a nurse rather than get resentful to your partner. Self awareness in action, healthy boundaries, thank you for that example!

Katie: This is such an interesting concept Evan - the inner child. I am going to use that in future. It's a helpful way to think of this.

Emma-Jane Grace: Lovely to see inner child honouring. Learning to reparent our selves. Sometimes our inner mother and father need some retraining too! Kirsten Neff did the first empirical studies on self compassion - here's a link to a questionnaire and mp3 meditations: <http://www.self-compassion.org/self-compassion-exercises.html>

Shalini Menon: The world we live in sets standards for us, often its designed to make us feel inadequate. Then its hard to feel worthy of love, of dreams... its takes me a great deal of practice & awareness to remind myself of that

Clarinda: value systems

Shilpa Setty: I feel its my need to be good to all, and sometimes being judgemental about my thoughts on myself n others. I really love how @Evan McGown has explained n that's exactly how it happens.

Nilisha: Discussion Question #3:

The responses really make me want to ask this:

How does our ability to show love and compassion to ourself impact our facilitation? How does self love helps us open our hearts?

Nicole Armos: I think it sets the best precedent....when I show love and care for myself as a facilitator, it opens up a space where others are also empowered to voice and tend to their own needs, express their feelings, and love themselves for who they are. It was a really powerful moment for me as a teacher/facilitator when I started to 1) allow myself to mess up at the front of the room and make a joke about it or admit "whoops I'm wrong" 2) to no longer care about my accent when I speak. And the tone of the rooms I am in completely changes

Naali Zahira: My primary facilitation service in the world right now is Compassionate Communication (Non-Violent Communication) - so I am facilitating the process of others growing into deeper self-compassion. It is an interesting and poignant challenge for me as a facilitator to be fully living and modelling self-compassion AS I facilitate.

Nilisha: I see a common thread in both your responses. To be vulnerable, honest and feel empowered with that experience.

Nicole: I love how you say that "fully living"

Nilisha: I feel for me as a facilitator if I connect with myself, I allow people to connect with me and vice versa. It is in that connection that magic happens!

Naali: So my ability to show love and compassion to myself is a powerful tool for my work. If I am not doing that work, the aliveness and connection in the group seems stunted to some extent, and I feel less willing to be vulnerable within the group context. I also feel like I tend to slip into a power-over role instead of a power-with context out of uncertainty and fear, in the absence of self-love.

Katie: I think if we have genuine self love then other people instinctively want to be part of that. It helps people feel more comfortable in themselves if someone else is very comfortable and relaxed. And yes, the ability to be emotionally vulnerable and to allow yourself to express and feel is also important

Nicole: That's a really interesting aspect you bring up Naali, about the way it affects power dynamics and our ability to hold an equal space

Nilisha: It is interesting how you talk of power in the context of lacking self love, Naali.

Katie: However, as the facilitator you also need to strike a balance. If you are triggered for example, I think you actually need to hold onto that and somehow not react. Perhaps the self-care part is making sure you take the time to debrief with yourself later and check that you have let that go and are not storing it inside?

Katie: Yes Naali - power with! What a fantastic concept

Naali: Katie - I am just beginning to recognize the importance of building regular debriefing (with self and others) into my life as a facilitator. Its SUCH an important tool to support myself by attending to my own experience of what happened and also for growth and future confidence and resiliency in my service.

Devon Little: hi all! loving your comments! one thing you are reminding me of is that I've realized that I can't actually take in feedback or grow if I don't have a healthy amount of self-love and self-respect going.

Arindita Gogoi: Self love also means you stand up for your own rights as a human being. In a country like India (perhaps in many others too, but I am talking from primary experience), sometimes women need to emphasize on it a little more. When I am a person who loves myself, I will do all in my capacity to speak up for myself and my right to live as a human being without prejudices, without the fear of being abused, without being barred from doing something on the basis of a gender inequality. If this reflects from me as a human being, perhaps others also get a window to seek the same equality.

Katie: Yes Naali - did find that when working with youth in particular I sometimes went to bed with so much still going on in my mind and some underlying frustrations. I had to bring in a practice of debriefing and really seeing where I was proud of my work and where I could improve, and also where I had to put my own feelings on hold and what those feelings meant

That's a really good one Devon Little. In the English context we are taught to shy away from critiquing each other at all costs, but as I have been told by Peggy Taylor in the words of wisdom of the wonderful Hanif, you have to hold people capable and able.

Nilisha: Welcome, Devon! Great to have you join us!

Evan McGown: Naali - I love what you're saying here, it resonates with me fully. As lead facilitators, there's that precious "back room time" when we get to not just debrief but vent and (if needed) cuss and "get out" what we had to hold in for the sake of the whole. If we repress it, I'm convinced it'll come out sideways later. So having a sacred and safe space for such confidential, don't-take-it-personally debriefing is essential...and what makes this possible are peers who understand the burden of holding a group and the self-sacrifices that are sometimes necessary in the moment...but we go back afterwards and retrieve the **part of our selves that were lost (soul loss and soul retrieval?)**.

Naali: Katie - That sounds very valuable. Thank you for the inspiration. I feel I need to be more intentional about that for my own growth, but mostly just for my well-being.

Nilisha: It is fascinating to see how this discussion had moved towards the self-love being a sacred space we need to create for ourselves as facilitators.

Evan: Nilisha, yes, which then brings in the idea of the necessity of RITUAL

Arindita: I just realized, self-love doesn't mean you have to love yourself silly, it is the recognition of the fact that we have limitless potential and that we can grow into whatever we want to nurture ourselves into. And that we have to give ourselves that chance again and again, come whatever circumstance in our lives.

Evan: like daily "heart circles" for our inner child - let it be heard, let it cry, sing it a song, hug it good and strong

Nilisha: What a deep insight, Arindita! I second that.

Arindita: And this thought is going to improve our facilitation because we are encouraging second chances, encouraging growth.

Nilisha: YES! Facilitation is all about creating the container and making it steady.

Evan: yes, Arindita, I love that idea of giving ourselves another chance, again and again. seems tied to the idea of welcoming and celebrating failure.

Clarinda: on going ~ goin' on & on

Evan: speaking of self-love, I need to run and get on with some. Thank you everyone for your heart-mind-sharing today.

Clarinda: responsible for the atmosphere & inviting to possibilities

Katie: Ooo - daily heart circles with ourself. That is such a beautiful idea. Sometimes I feel like my running time becomes this by necessity. It just sort of comes up in my mind as I run or cycle. I love the idea of really naming it and giving it a framework.

Nilisha: I also feel the daily heart circles with ourselves with help us uncover patterns of undelying needs over time. Great Idea!

Clarinda: interaction with people ~ what can be revealed in each other's presence

Shalini Menon: I said this on twitter yesterday: The ability to love oneself, comes with the ability to facilitate oneself. When I have the ability to facilitate myself, I am more equipped to facilitate conversations and people around me

Nilisha: YES! Beautifully articulated. It goes with my belief that we do not put on a facilitator's hat when we want to. We have to be 'it' all the time.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Practice Question #1:

How do you practice self-love? What else would you want to do to cultivate a healthy self-love practice?

Nilisha: My current practice involved really indentifying my triggers patterns and the underlying needs. I write a whole lot of affirmations often. And I dedicate 45-60 mins of time in a day to doing what makes me happy.

I would like to weave in some group work into my practice. And more meditation!

Naali Zahira: So many ways - an important one lately is communicating with others in a way that there are feedback loops for me to know that I am being heard accurately. And if I was not heard in the way I desire to be (if communication isn't actually happening) to take the time to clarify and be sure that I am heard. and to help the other do the same.

Nilisha: That is a wonderful intention! I think I do that, but maybe not always. I'd like to be SURE that its happening daily.

Nicole Armos: I am working on checking in often about my physical/emotional/mental needs and reorienting myself to accomodate those. For a while I also had a reverse to-do list that was powerful-- writing down whatever I achieved in the day, even unconventional things like "you paused to watch the sunset!"

Nilisha: I hear you saying that you want to be heard at two levels - first by yourself to understand what you are saying and then by the group to know if they heard you the way it was intended. Right? Naali

Tavi Baker: yes Nicole I've heard that called the "ta da" list!

Naali: What else would I want to do? Invest in bi-weekly sound/movement therapy sessions to explore what I may be unaware I am feeling, and attend to those feelings/needs. Nicole I LOVE the reverse to-do list!

Nicole: I like your idea of adding in group work Nilisha, and also really need to start doing more exercise! Must re-balance caring for my mental curiosities and my physical needs

Olusola Adebisi: walking regularly in the woods, daily movement and meditation practice, keeping a journal, writing poetry, framing my life as a 'heroes journey.'

What else could I add?

Better relationship to money
Better relationship to food...

Nicole: oooh I love the idea of the "heroes journey"

Naali: Nilisha - Clever - was it intentional to respond with a feedback loop?

Nilisha: Naali, as they say, you are in the right place at the right time!

Olusola Adebisi, great input on the 'heroes journey'. How would you do that? Draw it out or write about it?

Naali: Nilisha - yes - in the context of a group, but more intentionally in my daily life as I find it is the day-to-day run-in conversations where we can be busy and not take time to hear and be heard - and I feel it's important for my to support myself to have a voice in relationship, as a part of my self-love.

Tavi: I flip through to a page of moments of mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh and try to remember the message during the day or week. I also started working on a self-care mission statement inspired by <http://www.selfcarebyaisha.com/>

Nilisha: Thank you for the resource, Tavi!

Naali: I love how you are emphasizing on self love being a constant moment to moment practice vs being an event.

Arindita Gogoi: My current practice is 1) Reminding myself that it is not too late to fall in love with oneself all over again 2) Create physical space for myself where I can be in without interference 3) In my day's schedule, dedicate out one hour (I know it is less, but my work is my-time too!) in which I research on, or do things that I love doing...like singing in the bathroom, sitting on a pavement, doing up my room, watching a play irrespective of whether I have company 4) Learning to spend time with self 5) Stop blaming others for anything that is happening in my life

Naali: Recently a dear friend has set the intention to fall in love with herself and is making dates with herself daily that she doesn't compromise by spending that time with anyone else. It is a powerful practice to take the time to fall in love with oneself.

Nilisha: Oh Wow! That reminds me of the Artists Dates that Julia Cameron talks about in her book The Artist's Way.

Arindita: Having said that, I must add, that my self-love practice also involves spending valuable time with people I really want to spend time with, not as a formality but because I want to. I have silently parted ways with people who I fundamentally disagree with, but don't love so much that I'd try to give my perspective more than once. That's my self-love; to surround myself with positive energy. PYE 3rd Thursday Assembly was a result of that self-love and I have never missed it in the past five months.

Emma-Jane Crace: Hmm, I guess the deepest self love practice for me currently is being with the self hate/loathing aspects. Learning how to listen into and being with the uncomfortable feelings. Discovering where the core beliefs were set up in childhood. Getting the innocence back then and bringing in empathy. Also practicing boundaries

Naali: Arindita - spending valuable time with people I enjoy is a very important practice for me too. Being intentional about carving that time out. Relationships are such a HUGE support and positive reflection in times when I am not seeing the best in myself.

Olusola Adebisi: Nilisha I write yes, but my main mode is oral storytelling. Thus I talk to myself deliberately and consciously framing my ups downs and encounters as experiences within the context of a hero's journey. I call the process

Nilisha: Oh that sounds like a deeply empowering process. I'd love to try that!

Arindita: Olusola Wow! I love that! It is different, but still somewhat similar to what I do; essentially, if I get a good listener (both close friends or complete strangers) if prompted to, I tend to tell snippets of my life like a story...especially those which I feel have been life changing, great learning experiences, in which I have failed or others when I have survived or some that I've simply enjoyed. But I have understood all of those only once the narration has got over over.

Shalini Menon: I play... irrespective of what age group.. my newpnew, my friends. I realised often I do fun stuff in workshops... but what does it take to live playfully. Being able to play, switch off, laugh, get some physical movement... is almost life giving

Shilpa Setty: A few things I do is

1. Meditation,
2. Cleaning (a process as prescribed by a spiritual practice where we clean the impressions that we have formed)
3. Reminding myself to be gentle on myself and understanding that everything that happens is for my good. N being in love with myself is a process, as more often i keep seeing many good and not so good things about me. I feel its all in my head.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Practice Question #2:

You have to deliver a 3 day workshop to a group of 16 year old at-risk youth. What would you include in the workshop? How would you go about it?

Nilisha: I'd love to see how we can work to deliver this workshop. I feel teenage is the formative years where we understand and define our self-worth and self-image, amidst all the tumultous change!

Evan McGown: How do you think inner child work would pan out in the context?

Katie Jackson: I would love to include some basic opening up to the self. I wonder how? Perhaps activities like The River or Life?

Nilisha: Absolutely..River Of Life would help the group own their stories. I am also thinking about Gratitude for Self sessions and maybe even a vizualisation session when we meet out most loving and compassionate self, express that self through art and make commitments.

Naali Zahira: Often when we make choices as youth and teens that we later regret, we begin cycles of self-hatred that can take years or a lifetime to heal - so, coming from my background I would talk about how when we make choices we feel regret about, we were making those choices because of needs in our lives and help them work through a choice they regret to find the needs that were motivating them - a starting place for self-compassion and a tool they can take with them to grow self-compassion every time they experience regret.

Also - I would introduce and encourage beginning creative self-gratitude journals - so they can have a daily practice of noticing positive things about themselves and a written record to come back to when they are not feeling the self-love. I think I will start one of my own today.

Nilisha: I hear forgiveness practice in your first comment. For how to deal with regret we may face. Gratitude journals are amazing. I like the idea of keeping one just for ourselves.

Arindita Gogoi: I have started my sessions with each kid talking about what they like most about themselves...and moving to what qualities make them appreciate someone else.

Clarinda R. Laforteza: prayer ~ throwing the net

Nilisha: Arindita - that sounds like the exact thing we are talking about today. What we feel for ourselves, to be able to do the same for others.

Arindita: Since they are at-risk youths, I'd engage them in activities that would focus on non-violent conflict resolution. Non-violent for others as well as non-violent to self. I'd have reflections on how far can a violence go and what can it lead us to and how can we divert our angers and violent instinct towards a positive, peaceful goal.

Shalini Menon: I often design a workshop like this with diverse tools - A superstar night - where you celebrate your skills, talent and your passion... and then I do a "No Talent Night" where everyone has to be involved... it is aimed at highlighting that we dont have to have a skill, talent to feel special... we are special anyways! It attacks the idea behind TV programs like 'American Idol' and Whose got talent'... The point is it doesnt matter if a group of people/judges think you are a winner or not, but who you think you are.

Nilisha: Those are some great ideas, Shalini! Tons of stuff to chew on. Thanks for sharing!

Practice Question #3:

Cultivating a Self-Love and Self-Care practice is something that happens over time and takes persistent effort. Some days a great. Some days are average when we face personal challenges or triggers, some days feel like we have hit rock bottom. And then we get harsh with ourselves.

What is ONE THING you will do to love yourself when you hit rock bottom or slip from your practice and don't feel compassionate towards yourself?

Nilisha: One thing I would do is to just stay with what I feel at the moment and try to understand what I happening to me. This understanding helps me feel compassion.

Nicole Armos: Have a good cry, and then spa night: bubble bath, comfort food, nail polish, rom-com, or put some great music on and dance! Mentally: I press the re-set button. I actually do this before rock-bottom. If I mess, up, am falling behind on everything, I just "re-start" from a clean slate

Naali Zahira: Nicole - LOVE it!

Nilisha: Restart button! I have one drawn in one of my journals. I keep resetting it- metaphorically

Nicole: I love that you have one drawn out!!also to explain the spa-night idea a bit more, I feel like my self-love and self-care feed into each other. If I'm not caring for myself I have to remember that I love myself, and when I don't feel much self love I need to start caring for myself in practice

Naali: I find at rock bottom it can be really good to put myself to bed, tell myself that tomorrow is a fresh start, and wake up the next day on a fresh foot. Often when I get to that place my body, nervous system and heart are on overload and need rest.

Actually - sometimes cleaning the house, making tea and then going to bed means I wake up to a clear space outside and inside, and that feels really powerful (and cleaning the ouse here takes no more than an hour).

Nilisha: Cleaning is something I do too. It helps me clean my mind. Has a deep metaphorical cleansing effect.

Nicole: Yes a clean house really helps me too NaaliI've been able to clean the kitchen every night for a while and it even encourages me to cook healthier stuff for myself when I wake up to a clean space

Arindita Gogoi: Gosh! I do this every single day...even if I am physically exhausted, I clean up my kitchen and tidy the living room...it gives me the feeling of a 'refresh' button...gives me the calmness and peace to re-think. I also call up one or two closest friends and the first thing I tell them on the phone is: "Tell me something good about me. Just one thing will do." And it works!

Also, writing something creative, even if it is just two lines, makes me feel good about myself

Clarinda R. Laforteza: I'm on my knees when I hit "rock bottom" ~ surrendered

There's a cry & it gushes out

Cultivating stillness to "know" ~ being rooted & grounded, stand on firm foundation

REST

Arindita: Or this.

Shalini Menon: Nicole ... I support bubble baths! I just got silent, often I sleep. Most times, when I wake up... I realise half the problem was in my head



Arindita: I don't have a bathtub

Shalini: me neither... but my nephew and I make soap bubbles in bathroom... pretty much the same feeling

Arindita: That sounds about right

Nilisha: Okay shining people! This post brings us to the end of our 90 minutes together today. A big thank you to all you loving souls for this deeply empowering conversation. I feel honoured to have learnt so much loving myself, from your stories, insights and ideas. The discussion was out the world

Katie Jackson would be sharing a transcript of this chat soon. If you feel you'd like to comment on the questions post these 90 mins, feel free to do so.

Let us shine the light of love real bright