



Perspective/Opinion

Stories of Love in the Time of Medicine: A Love Never-Ending

Grace Buechel, MCW-CW MS1

We've all dreamed of our happy ending. It's what we strive to attain, and it often dictates how we live our everyday life. For me, the happy ending is a successful medical career, a joyful family, bits of traveling and adventure, and of course, a true love. After all, love is a charming, emotional, and foundational part of life. Unfortunately, it took me 20 years to realize what love is all about—to understand that the single most important person you can love is yourself.

My venture for self-love had never been conscious—never once had I made it a goal to discover the most genuine, treasuring parts about me. Rather, I sought out love for others, whether in family, friendships, or intimate partners. I gave my all to those around me, promising to love them always for who they are, hoping that this love would be so true, so reciprocated. And most times, it was. But in the case that I expended myself to show someone love while never receiving the same feelings back, I fell to a low place. And this place seemed to reiterate, over and over, that it was me who wasn't good enough.

"I am not enough." The reminder first came in these instances of rejection by those I had tried to love. It was painful, as one would expect. But never would I understand the hole I would dig myself as this reminder came again and again with other experiences: body image, academics, social circles. I was never skinny enough. Queue starving myself. I was never going to get into medical school if I wasn't the perfect student. Queue prioritizing my education over all else, even my physical and mental wellbeing. I was never good enough to have all those seemingly great friends. Queue isolation. In this hole, I could only view myself in this damaging light. It took me months, years, even, with the help of many gracious individuals, to understand that I had let myself down. For when I promised to love everyone else around me to my highest capability, I hadn't given myself the same promise. I never promised to love myself.

Without a doubt, I have never taken a more dangerous risk for love than choosing to love others to a standard to which I could never love myself. It's scary to think that had I continued down my path, this lie would have torn me apart. I am, to this day, immensely grateful for the support I was able to receive during this time. Without it, I never would've believed that a simple promise to myself, a change in dialogue, could lead me to this all-important, necessary sustenance: self-love.

And here I am, encouraging each of you to put yourself first—to recognize (and even list) the amazing qualities you possess, the whole wonderful person you are. No matter how stressful things get, no matter a personal failure or a difficult test, I wish for you to look in the mirror, and smile at the reflection staring back at you. To not only acknowledge, but to truly believe, that you are deserving of love, especially that which comes from yourself.

Grace is from Lake Mills, WI, and received her undergraduate degree from Purdue University. She describes her desire to succeed academically leading to perfectionist tendencies, which she combated during her journey to Medicine, by seeing that a truly successful physician is one who cares for themselves as they do for their patients. This has, in part, led to her decision to pursue Psychiatry for her career. Beyond school, she enjoys traveling, reading murder mysteries, water-coloring, down-hill skiing, and trying new foods.