

*The Emotional Mastery™ Series*  
*Dr Joan Rosenberg*

***~Compliments~***

***Their Role in Solidifying Confidence  
and Self-Esteem***



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***Their Role in Solidifying Confidence and Self-Esteem***

Taking in compliments, what I call “*absorbing the positive*,” is a crucial aspect of solidifying confidence and high self-esteem. Ever feel stuck with the way you view yourself? Accepting compliments helps you update your self-image and sense of self. Realizing that you are becoming who you most desire to be is often the first experience that follows. Also, your connections with others are deepened by understanding how asking for help is really a compliment as opposed to a burden. Holding that perspective helps you feel resourceful.

***Self-Criticism and Refusing the Compliments of Others***

Have you ever seen yourself in the mirror and then launch into a harsh self-attack on you or your physical features? Ever stopped to consider whose mean voice that is – your own voice that’s being mean to yourself - or someone else’s voice and words that you are just repeating.

Have you ever refused compliments by immediately devaluing, explaining away or playing down the compliment(s) you were just given? Even though you received a sincere compliment, did you ever question why someone was complimenting you? Ever think you weren’t or aren’t worthy or deserving of

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hearing kind words of praise or recognition? Or did you have the reaction that people didn't really mean what they said or that they were only complimenting you to be nice or to get something from you? Or maybe, once you received a compliment, you had the thought "yeah, but if you knew the real me, you would never say that".

***Why Taking in Compliments is so Hard***

Most people either find it hard to or don't accept genuine compliments. There are many possible reasons for this. You might refuse compliments simply because you don't know what to do with them. Accepting compliments may challenge your cultural beliefs and what you were taught as you were raised – so you dismiss them in order to maintain 'cultural humility' or because you think accepting the compliment will lead to arrogance, conceit or something similar. You might think you don't deserve such kind words and responses.

Perhaps you refuse a compliment because you give false compliments and believe others do the same, so their compliments are not believable to you. More commonly, however, the compliment is discrepant with how you see yourself; as a consequence it's not believable to you. And no one can 'cheerlead' you into believing them; that never works. Attempts to convince you go nowhere.

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The compliment may, in fact, be very believable. Except here is what I've found. You will experience a compliment as discrepant and not believable especially if you don't speak up and tell the truth to others about what is really happening in your life and about how you experience them. Your lack of truth telling and genuineness is what leads to the internal reaction of: "yeah, but if you knew the real me, you would never say that".

And, it's important to change your understanding of compliments so you can begin to take in and really absorb the energy, experience and goodness they bring to your life. You likely hear the compliment as coming out of nowhere. Like it just kind of arrived and BAM!, it's right there.

Yet, what is so misunderstood is that compliments do not occur in a vacuum. They don't just show up and arrive out of nowhere. In fact, compliments are reflections of you. When someone compliments you, yes, he or she is ***REFLECTING YOU . . . BACK TO YOU!*** Those consistent compliments and those multiple spontaneous compliments you receive . . . *they are reflections of you back to you.* And it is really taking in and absorbing those compliments that is a crucial element of solidifying your confidence, self esteem and self-image.

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**When someone compliments you,  
he or she is REFLECTING YOU . . . BACK TO YOU!**

Let's start with achievements or milestones having been reached. Notice how this is relevant for you.

Here's how it works. When people (especially the ones with whom you feel close) acknowledge your achievement through praise or recognition, the subtle message is: *"I see you and understand the efforts that went into this achievement. Through praise or recognition, I acknowledge how important it is: to me, to you and for you. I act as a mirror for you. Recognizing you allows you to fully acknowledge and recognize yourself. This recognition helps you see yourself accurately, acknowledge your own good works in the future and experience the confidence in yourself relative to your abilities, expertise, skills, talents or success."*

Absorbing positive feedback from others is yet one more essential element in changing your view of your self – it's a **must** that it happens. In this case, taking in the new information by way of compliments is like bringing you "up-to-date" . . . somewhat like the changes we see in technology . . . moving from huge

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computers taking up full rooms, to desktop models, to laptops, to tablets and smart-phones. Or transitioning from wires to transmit electricity to wireless technology. Or from an older software program to the updated software program. By refusing to accept the positive feedback you receive, you keep ‘running your old story’ – your old and outdated view of yourself. As a result, you can never fully experience the self confidence and self esteem that is possible for you.

Two really important things need to happen to “solidify” your self confidence and self esteem. First, you need to be “speaking what you know” or speaking the truth of your experience. And the second . . . you must be open to taking in, believing and fully absorbing the kind, complimentary and positive things people have to say about you. If you don’t take this new information in and *really allow yourself to feel it and believe it*, then you are destined to re-live an old view of yourself over and over again. Compliments and feedback help solidify confidence and self-esteem by helping you update your self-image and sense of self. Think of it as the varnish that metaphorically seals in the confidence and self-esteem you now experience.

Though, in general, it’s not great for you to rely too heavily on what others think or say about you, this type of feedback has its place and is relevant and useful. There is a difference in making use of this information ***to define as opposed***

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*to refining your sense of self.* In this case, the *compliments you receive can help you refine your view of yourself.*

You are an ever-evolving human being who desires and is capable of being more, especially if you are intentional about it. If you have ever dreamed of being a certain kind of person, understand that compliments are part of the “finishing school” for you to achieve that dream. *You will find that once you take in these compliments and positive feedback by really absorbing them, you will begin to experience and believe that you are becoming who you most desired to be or that you are already living as the person you desired to become.* That’s an awesome moment of awareness – perhaps the first time you really feel like you are settling into and comfortable in your own skin.

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*Absorbing the Positive*

Find a nice, quiet place to sit. Place your hands together in an open position with your pinky fingers touching alongside each other and with you staring at both palms. Now, as you have been changing and growing, think of the positive words that people have been saying to you. It doesn't matter whether it is from family, friends, co-workers, school peers or even children. Stop and think about what each person has said, think about it, breathe and fully take it in – with the experience of the truth of their words. Imagine yourself stacking each one of those positive statements/memories, one on top of the other in the palms of your hands. When you have stacked several of them, take a few more slow deep breaths, embrace and enjoy what they have said and when you are ready, place both of your hands over your heart and breathe in the fullness of their words once again. Simply use this process over and over again.

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You embrace your humanity. Here you are comfortable with the experience of, and need for, both independence and dependence. You can now acknowledge your needs and limitations, ask for help and openly and warmly receive what is given. Experiences you thought were beyond you—love, accepting compliments, being nurtured and supported—are received openly and warmly. Thus, you'll feel capable (well-connected to yourself) and resourceful (well-connected to others). These are the elements that comprise emotional strength.

***Hard to Ask Others for Help?***

***The ‘Compliment Cure’***

More often than not, people will tell me that they don't want to lean on anybody or ask for help, especially because they don't want to burden anyone with their troubles. How often do you hear yourself say or perhaps even say to others that you don't want to ask anyone for help because you don't want to burden them? Or you don't want to lean on anybody because you don't want to *be* a burden. This concern is probably one of the statements I hear with the greatest frequency. Finding it hard to ask for help (of any kind) is just another one of life's interesting paradoxes.

Let's look at this idea of asking for help. The greatest symbol of strength, the military, and the images associated with the military actually offer me a great

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analogy about dealing with feelings, vulnerability and asking for help simultaneously.

Think about what the military does when it is about to start a new military campaign in some new region (for better or worse depending on your values). The planners and strategists consider all their points of vulnerability and “weakness”. What do they do? In the ideal, they call for help and assistance to add to their strength. Interesting huh? Admitting “weakness” and vulnerability potentially allows them to be stronger.

Asking for help is not a burden . . .

Asking for help values the friendship and compliments the listener.

Asking for help strengthens you and adds to your emotional resources.

Stop and think about asking for help from this perspective. Has anyone ever asked you to listen to their problems? What was your emotional reaction when you were asked? Did you like that you were being sought out? Did you feel like your opinion might be important? Did you feel like the person valued you? Or valued your friendship? And respected you?

Once you offered your physical help (assisted with a move, babysitting, running an errand) or listened and offered your guidance or advice, did you feel closer to that acquaintance, friend or family member, or did it seem that that person

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felt closer to you? If your experience of being sought out was generally positive – and most of us do have that experience when others genuinely want our opinion or perspective - then it likely felt like a compliment to “be there” for your friend or family member.

Being sought out for help values you and values the friendship. Being asked to help someone compliments you. Being sought out creates more emotional closeness with the person who asked for your help, more closeness in the relationship.

So, if you are complimented by others asking you for help . . . what makes you think you won't compliment others when *you* ask for help? It's the ‘Compliment Cure’. Stop depriving yourself and others. Stop depriving others of the compliment that is you.

Let the people in your life enjoy the compliment of you.