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R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Found Out What It Means To Me

By Deborah Jane Wells

An excerpt from
Choose Your Energy: Change Your Life!

I honor my choices; I do the best I can with the love and light I have at the time.

Unconditional self-respect is one of the keys to declaring your independence from stress and discovering a life of generous, effortless, gracious flow filled with faith, hope, prosperity, peace, and joy. Such respect begins with mindfulness—caring enough about myself and my experience to pay attention to what is happening and

what I am feeling. If I don't recognize when I'm feeling stressed, I can't do anything to change it.

Respect is also about not beating myself up for past choices—things I thought, said, did, or didn't do. It's about knowing that I am doing the best I can with the love and light I have access to at the time. Every experience is an opportunity. As I am able to recognize and transform more of my fear-based limiting beliefs into love-based empowering truths, I gain access to greater wisdom, clarity, and confidence, moving myself further along my personal Journey to Wholeness.

By learning to demonstrate unconditional respect for myself in every moment, I

become more able to demonstrate it for others as well.

Respect is also about boundaries, being clear where mine end and yours begin. Many of us find it hard to set clear and healthy limits on what we will and won't allow others to do to us. Even more of us have difficulty not violating others' boundaries.

Consider this example from my own life. On Monday night, my spouse comes home from work miserable about how his boss is treating him. It pains me to see my husband so unhappy. I listen patiently and sympathetically to sixty minutes of complaining. I tell him exactly what he needs to do. He doesn't do it. Tuesday night, he comes home singing the second verse of the boss abuse song. I listen *less* patiently and repeat, with additional rationale, what I told him to do the night before. He shuts down and retreats to his den to watch football. Wednesday night, same song, third verse. This time I don't listen *at all*, blow a gasket, and tell him to stop being a wimp. He demonstrates just how much of a wimp he isn't by getting royally annoyed with me and storming off to the den. I demonstrate just how much of a wimp I am not by following him into the den and repeating my suggestion with even greater volume and specificity, including what he can do with the horse he rode in on.

The good news—my husband's boss is now completely off the hook because we are now so angry at each other that what his boss is doing to him pales in comparison.

Some of you are taking my side: She's a professional management consultant and life coach with more than thirty years' experience. What moron wouldn't immediately implement anything she suggests? Others are taking my

husband's side: She's a pushy overbearing know-it-all who's taken three months to write the final three chapters of her book. Why doesn't she stop sapping his self-confidence and mind her own business? To both sides I say, "Blah, blah, blah."

The root of the problem is not whether my suggestions were wise. The issue is the nature of the core energy underneath me providing suggestions in the first place. Input stemming from a supposed "desire to help" becomes interference when it is fueled by fear in the form of anxiety, self-doubt, avoidance, or arrogance.

Anxiety is when I can't stand whatever pain I am choosing to feel over the choices he is making, and in order to stop my pain, I need to get him to choose a different path.

Self-doubt is when I fear that if he isn't making the same choices for his life that I'm making for mine, maybe I'm wrong.

Avoidance is when there are aspects of myself I'm not yet willing to address, so I distract myself by focusing my need for personal growth on him instead.

Arrogance is when I dare to presume that I can run his life better than he can, despite the fact that I've not walked even one mile in his shoes.

The common denominator in each case is that fear, not love, is the core energy fueling my suggestions.

In the scenario of my husband's problem with his boss, my real goal wasn't to help my husband. My goal was to relieve my own fear-based pain at experiencing his pain. My goal was to stop his pain as quickly as possible so that I could stop my own. What I was doing didn't "come from a good place"; it came from fear. From wanting to fix it for him, to release myself from fear faster, instead of respecting him enough to fix it himself when the time was

optimal for *his* highest good.

The tip-off was that I got annoyed when he didn't take my suggestion—annoyance being one of fear's many ugly cousins. It is nothing short of arrogant of me to think I could possibly run my husband's life better than he could.

I'm asked all the time if this means it's always wrong to make suggestions or try to teach anyone anything. No, that is not what it means. Here's how to tell the difference between making a respectful suggestion and disrespectful interference.

When I am coming from respect, I have no energetic charge over whether you act on what I share. When I'm being respectful, I'm fully and creatively engaged in the process with no attachment to the outcome. Disrespect is evidenced when I get hooked by what you decide to do or not do: either relief or happiness when you do it my way or anxiety, frustration, or anger when you don't.

Either reaction demonstrates that I am a little too invested in how you live your life. When I feel neutral about whether you do or don't adopt my suggestions or act on the information I shared, I'm coming from respect.

This lesson was driven home for me dramatically when I heard the following story a couple years ago.

In late fall, a man stood enthralled watching a caterpillar spin a cocoon on a branch outside the kitchen window. All winter long, the man watched over the cocoon, amazed at how it withstood the onslaught of freezing rain, blizzards, and harsh winds. When spring finally arrived, the man was relieved to see the cocoon still hanging in there. As spring ripened into summer, the day finally came when the butterfly began to make its departure from the cocoon. The man watched the

butterfly work to break free. The process went slowly and looked difficult. The man became impatient with how long it was taking and anxious that the butterfly was suffering. He could hardly bear to watch.

Finally, beside himself with frustration and worry, the man decided to help. He took a small pair of nail scissors and carefully cut the cocoon open wider to allow the butterfly to escape more quickly and easily. Alas, the butterfly did escape but died just a few minutes later. What appeared to the man as a needless struggle was actually crucial developmental time the butterfly needed to be able to thrive outside the cocoon. Robbed of that added growth opportunity, the butterfly never developed the strength it needed to survive and flourish.

When I first heard this story, I sat at my kitchen counter and sobbed; I finally got it. All those times when, energized by my own fear, I had interfered with another's life, I had been decidedly unloving. When I disrespected the other's personal path by trying to shortcut her opportunity to learn in her own way and time, I had demonstrated anxiety, self-doubt, avoidance, and arrogance.

While the lesson of the chrysalis didn't result in me ending all fear-based interference overnight, it has made me much more aware of what's energizing my actions. In those situations where fear and a lack of respect are my fuel, I am faster at detaching and releasing myself and the other person to walk our authentic individual paths with love and light.

These examples don't just demonstrate the subtlety of respecting others' boundaries; they point the way to respecting my own. Without a doubt, the greatest violator of my own personal boundaries is me. I am the perpetrator of unconscionably disrespectful words and acts against myself. Much of it

happens in the confines of my own head.

When I use my thoughts to undermine my self-confidence and punish myself repeatedly for past “mistakes,” I am abusing myself. When I incessantly rehash painful scenarios from my past, I cause myself far greater injury through that repetitive instant replay than the original abuser ever caused me. When I communicate to myself in subtle and not-so-subtle ways that I don’t matter, am not good enough, and am powerless, I am being cruel. When I tell myself I’m crazy to keep thinking, saying, and doing the things I do, I disrespect my journey and myself.

Most of us never say anything half as loathsome to others, even in our most enraged moments, as we say to ourselves daily in casual conversation.

Respecting myself means zero tolerance for self-judging and self-abuse.

Unconditional self-respect is akin to falling in love with yourself. What would that look like? Remember the last time you fell in love with someone else? How did you treat the object of your affection? You probably thought about him a lot, paid attention to his needs, and treated him as if he mattered. Because, to you, that person did matter; he mattered a great deal. In fact, you probably became downright obsessed with every aspect of your beloved.

Falling in love with yourself looks just like that: paying attention and treating yourself as if you matter. Because you do; you matter a great deal. You are a unique cocreative expression of the Divine. You are the only *you* we’ve got. You are a

precious natural resource not to be taken for granted. When you fall in love with yourself, everything else falls into place, personally and professionally.

The only person controlling your life is *you!* Choose your energy and change your life. If you enjoy making yourself miserable, limiting your options and contaminating the energy of every relationship and situation you encounter, you are free to continue doing so. But if you’re intrigued by the life-expanding possibilities inherent in falling in love with yourself and fueling your life with love, respect, curiosity, compassion, and gratitude, read my book “**Choose Your Energy: Change Your Life!**”

[Click here](#) to visit the portal for my book, **Choose Your Energy: Change Your Life** (Hay House/Balboa Press 2013).

[Click here](#) to visit the portal for my weekly 60-minute Internet radio show on the VoiceAmerica EmPOWERment channel.

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Through healing and self-exploration, she discovered that loving yourself unconditionally is the key to transforming your personal life, your work, and the world.

Deborah’s books, blog, radio show, and signature coaching programs help individuals and organizations harness the transformative power of love to step into their greatness.

<http://djwlifecoach.wordpress.com/>