

Why Movement is Medicine for Highly Sensitive People (podcast)



The world of movement and exercise can be an odd one. "Personal Training" often brings to mind a world of body building, instructors yelling at you to do more push-ups and other "fun stuff" like that, ahem.

Yet for us Highly Sensitive People, the right movement can empower us. Exercise not only makes us physically stronger and healthy, it also helps us access our intuition.

There is an old paradigm of spirituality that is about "getting out and away from" the body. For a long time, in many traditions, our body was seen as an "impediment" to spirituality and intuitive truth.

The problem with that is that it ignores all the intuition and wisdom that is only available and accessible when we are actually strongly grounded in our body. Your body is trying to communicate with you, but you can't hear it if you're not home! (home as in: "in" your body)

"Your body isn't just a vehicle to move your brain around"

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In this podcast I chat with movement expert, personal trainer and empath, Clare Rooney from ClareRooney.com.



Clare is passionate about helping people better understand their body through exercise, and she creates tailored workouts for people based on their individual strengths and weaknesses. She is an expert at decoding what your body is trying to tell you about how it wants and needs to move in order to feel good.

In this information-packed podcast we talk about:

- How exercise can pull you back into your body as a sensitive person and why this matters for your stress-levels and intuitive knowing.
- The problem with old-fashioned yoga practices like lotus posture.
- Clare shares about her empath experiences of leaving her body during a running practice, and realising that running wasn't the right practice for her, and why.
- We talk about exercising with adrenal fatigue (Clare and I have both experienced adrenal fatigue)
- Why Highly Sensitive People need exercise instruction in more detail.
- We discuss that tricky distinction between "taking it slow" versus avoiding necessary work, and the importance of finding a teacher who can support you in walking that fine balance of not overdoing it but also not avoiding the work.
- Clare explains that our bodies are more flexible and adjustable than we assume. We talk about the impact of energy on our body and it's "fixed" positions.

For #HSP exercise can be a great way to focus on yourself & cut out excess stimulation.

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Clare also introduces important "technical" aspects of movement:

- We talk about artistic, free-flowing, regenerative movement versus highly structured strength-building movement and that all people need both, but tend to prefer one.
- Clare explains that you can get yourself biomechanically checked to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses and see which exercise would benefit you most.
- We talk about how the sideplane of motion is often ignored in exercise but this sideplane is crucial for integrating our masculine and feminine energies.
- Clare gives examples of how things happening in your body aren't "just" about your body. The legs for example are a metaphor for so many things: standing on your own two feet, putting your best foot forward... doing the legwork and getting a leg up.

“The more we avoid, the more the body locks-up and gets flexibility issues” ~Clare Rooney

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Listen to the podcast below:

Introducing Pilates

In the podcast Clare and I also talk about Pilates and how this exercise system is different from other kinds of movement. There is a mindfulness that naturally comes with learning Pilates. It helps refine movement, thereby balancing your body and brain. We also talked about the importance of getting a movement teacher who is both certified and qualified. It’s easy to get certified, being qualified is much harder!

Clare has an online Pilates Course for Beginners. Personally, I find her style and detailed instructions very helpful (I always get frustrated and stuck when someone can’t give me the fine details of how to do something. Since I notice so many subtleties, I get overwhelmed when someone doesn’t address those things and doesn’t explain to me what to do with it all.)

You can try Clare’s Pilates below:

You can also do your own mini “biochemical assessment” to see how your body is faring:

Clare’s Online Beginner’s Pilates Class is available for purchase [here](#).

Clare also works with people locally or online through Online Personal Training . You can find her at: ClareRooney.com

“Tightness and restrictions in the body are awarenesses that your body is trying to bring to you” ~Clare Rooney

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When a Narcissist is in Power: 7 things that happen & 6 things you can do

If you grew up with one or two narcissistic parents, then one of the biggest “OMG not again” experiences you can have is to end up in a workplace, social group (or country!) that has a narcissist in charge.

You thought you made it out, and now you’re “back there”.

You find yourself slipping back into old, familiar, claustrophobic patterns of panic and people pleasing. You know exactly what to do to “make it work”. Simultaneously, you hate yourself.

As a kid you told yourself that as a grown-up you’d be able to move on. You wouldn’t have to deal with this ever again. You’d be your own person, in charge of your own life.

Yet, the irony is that, since narcissists love love love having power over others, and they will aggressively fight for what they want, many DO end up in positions of power.

You might walk into a room one day and find that the leader you’re introduced to makes your stomach turn in very old and very familiar ways (and it’s not because of romantic butterflies).

When this happens, a few different things typically will come up.

1- All your unresolved fears from the past will surface.

Unfortunately, it’s not enough that you “grew up and moved on”. Whichever parts of you are inwardly still frozen in old patterns of fear, people-pleasing and beating up on yourself, they’ll get reactivated.

THIS by the way is a prime reason narcissists can have so much power over others. It’s not because they are all-powerful. Rather, it’s because for those of us who grew up with parents like this, they hook into old emotional patterns of powerlessness.

As a result, your brain may be telling you one thing about how to interact and what to say, but inwardly, your emotions are turning you to mush. The new narcissist in charge just pushed your inner 3-year old button. Emotionally, all you want to do is cry and grab your blankie.

2- There will be a lot of *other people* who don’t think things are quite that bad.

“He doesn’t mean it like that”. “I’m sure she really does care”. “It’s just the stress talking”. The scary reality is that, despite the many many popular psychology articles on narcissism, most people don’t realise how real it is. That is, until they are *dramatically* forced to confront it.

As a result, you may be the only person in the workplace who can accurately predict how screwed up your boss is going to behave. Meanwhile others poo poo it away as “it’s not too bad, really”.

You can feel like the lone fighter, and in many ways you are

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What’s important to remember though is that nothing will change if you try to protect everyone else from the narcissist’s influence. As long as you stay the lone fighter, protecting everyone from the consequences of having a self-absorbed dinosaur(ette) in charge, it will be much too easy for management to *blame you* for making a big stink about nothing.

If you want the workplace to wake-up (and there is no guarantee it will) you need to let them suffer the dinosaur consequences to some extent. You also need to look out for your own well-being.

If and when other people start to see through the fog of charm and power and recognize something dinosaurily disconcerting, that’s the moment to band together and take some action. Unfortunately, you can’t *make* them see. It takes time for people to put two and two together.

This by the way is another big reason narcissists can get a lot of power: many people refuse to see them for who they really are. Narcissism is a very uncomfortable reality. As a result, there are plenty of people who will tell themselves things aren’t that bad as a way to self-soothe.

Surely all parents love their children, even if they don’t necessarily show it, right?

Surely every person in charge of a charity is in that position because they want to aid humanity, right?

Surely every spiritual leader only has the best interests of others in mind, right?

Surely every person who wears yogapants sincerely means it when they wish you love and light, right?

And on, and on.

The reality of narcissists upsets many people's worldviews. Like the day you learned Santa wasn't real. Even if you'd slowly started to realise it for yourself, it's still depressing, sad and disconcerting. It's a shock, one you try your hardest to avoid.

3- You avoid your own anger, because you don't want to be like a narcissist.

If you were raised by a narcissist, then you know how out of control they can be with their anger. They either blame others and throw their anger around, or they will freeze you out for weeks because "you did something wrong". Whether they (emotionally) hit you or freeze you out, their anger gets ugly, really ugly.

So naturally, you don't want to be like that! The only problem is, you've got your anger too (even if you want to write me right now to tell me you are "above" any feelings of anger - hint: check below!).

Without any healthy modeling of how to process anger, you were left with just 2 obvious options: take it out on others, or suppress it and try to pretend it's not there. Most of us started off doing the latter. You associate anger with bad behaviour, you don't want to be that way, so you make your anger wrong all together and try to cut it off completely.

There are a lot of spiritual paths by the way which encourage this anger squashing. It's not healthy, because the anger is still there, but now it's eating away at you from the inside. In this way, you've created a little tyrant on the inside bashing away at you.

If you want to deal with narcissists attacking you on the outside, you have to come to terms with the ways in which you are so afraid of them, or so afraid of being like them, that you'd rather take all that anger and beat up on yourself instead. Guess what, doing that only gives a narcissist more power: you're effectively doing the work for them.

So this is another reason narcissists gain power: they are in cahoots with our inner attackers. The more outrageous a narcissist behaves, the more they will fuel anger in others. When this anger doesn't have a healthy outlet, it will end up beating away at us on the inside. We effectively swallowed a Trojan Horse. All that unfairness and danger and the anger it creates, now has a way to attack us from the inside.

As a result, you may feel ill, or paralysed or plain bad. Either way, the anger is not being channeled into righteous and productive action.

4. Narcissists are very very good at finding other people's wounds.

You could say they are the Sherlock Holmes of triggering your pain. They will also - if they are leaders - provide you with a plan for your pain: follow them! Do what they tell you! Fight the common enemy! Kill the Jews!

Narcissists have a lifetime of practice figuring out how to manipulate others. What is the best way to manipulate and control someone? Find the backdoor entrance to their psyche. They will crawl up into the armpit of your subconscious and start energizing things there that you didn't even know you had. You didn't know you had them because - typically - these are the parts of you that you either judge and don't like or that are so painful that you never processed them.

How do you take away this power they have over you? Consciously heal your own wounds: look at them, feel the pain, learn to move through those experiences instead of keeping them locked inside like unstable ammunition.

Your own unhealed trauma is ammunition that a narcissist can use against you.

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5 - They are utterly confusing, but present themselves like they're clear as day.

A narcissist has no real coherent plan. All they do is decide what they want right now, and what it will take to get there. If they want to blame you, they'll find a way to make that happen, even if it contradicts what they told you yesterday.

If they want more power, they will find a way to make it happen. They may suck up to you one day, put you down the next, befriend the enemy, change a deal made. You may be scratching your head thinking: "What's their plan? Surely, they must have some deep and intelligent framework that they are operating on?"

While you're spending lots of energy trying to figure out their "coherent philosophy", they're actually operating from a toddler place of "want more food now" and throwing around all kinds of strategies (even contradictory ones) to see which one will get them what they want. That is, until finally, yay, more cheese for their macaroni!

Meanwhile, you're scratching your head wondering why they are now pro what they seemed to be against, and blaming you for the same thing they were praising someone else for. While you're digging for their deeper truth, they're on to their next goal, ketchup!

This is another reason narcissists can get an insane amount of power. Even if they are being completely erratic, most people around them will assume that *surely* they have some kind of meaningful plan. This is because, the reality of a narcissist (and how superficial they are) is just too outrageous for a sane brain to comprehend.

Secondly, for all that narcissists lack in sanity, they make up for by projecting an unshakable sense of confidence. Emotionally, they come

across like they know everything about everything. That's because, on some level, they believe in their fantasy personality as "the one who knows where it's all at".

6 - They will say what others won't.

Better the devil that you know, than the devil that you don't, right? Depending on the type of narcissist you are dealing with (covert narcissists -conversely- are very cunning at saying the "right" thing because they know it's what people expect) overt narcissists can come across as "brutally honest".

They will say what others may think but would never express out loud. In their own aggressive way, they may come across as being very transparent. "Yes, he hates gays, but at least he doesn't pretend otherwise!" "Yes, so she thought the presentation was awful and she was unnecessarily rude about it, but at least she didn't just smile and nod politely!".

If you're tired of people saying one thing, and believing something else, a narcissist may seem like a breath of fresh air initially. Finally, someone who speaks their mind! The problem is though, their mind can easily change (see point 5) AND who's to say they are actually sharing *all* of it?

In many ways, a narcissist will test boundaries, see what they can get away with. Chances are, once they were publicly able to go THIS far, they will take it even further *next* time. What's more, since their strategy is typically based on an emotional desire for more power (whatever the cost) they will amplify whatever strategy works. So yelling worked? Great, yell louder!! So excluding people worked? Great, exclude even more people!

7. Whatever it is, it's never enough.

There is psychological research that shows that - as people - there are a lot of things we can get used to as long as it's done to us gradually. We are able to take a psychological step that is "a bit of a stretch, but still possible to defend". From that new, stretched place, we can again take a step. We'll defend our own shift afterwards and pretend we never shifted at all. "Oh, but I've always done/thought that!"

Why do I bring this up here? Well, a cunning narcissist leader is a master at stretching people. They will do something outrageous yet still defensible and when people have accepted that as the new status quo, they will force another outrageous yet defensible step. This is how, one step at a time, a group of people can shift into a way of thinking and way of life that they never otherwise would have thought themselves capable of.

If you grew up in a narcissistic family, you know this. If you have been in a long-term relationship with a narcissist, you know this. If you've worked under a narcissistic boss, you saw how they slowly but surely poisoned the work atmosphere.

It never starts with an atomic bomb, it starts with inappropriate fireworks. But, they're just fireworks, right? Let's not make a big deal out of it. Let's get some extra strong earplugs... Oh, they've opened up a shooting range in the canteen? Well, I guess it's good we already had those earplugs, haha! Look, they're just blowing off some steam, I'm sure they won't take it any further... Wait, why is there a grenade hidden under the palm tree as part of the easter egg hunt? They ran out of other decorations? Ah, that's plausible...

There comes a point when everyone's involved. You bought the fireworks, because you're the assistant in charge of supplies (just doing your job!). You were re-organising the canteen and heard some talk of a shooting range, but didn't think that would actually happen. Then it did, but these are all you co-workers! You know them! They'd never do anything bad.

Before you know it, you've gotten involved. You didn't mean to, but now you need to defend the "new you" to yourself. Owning up and saying: "I got swept up in the madness, I'm sorry! I'm going to back out of this now" that's hard, really hard. What if instead you can buy into a new patriotic myth? Something about militarism being just a symbolic expression of a need for more self-esteem and practical action in the workplace? Before you know it, you're spreading the rhetoric too.

It's easy to think: I would never do THAT. I would never go THAT FAR. I would never participate in THAT and yet, if students can do awful things to each other as part of hazing rituals, if anyone can give in to peer pressure, if any of us care about belonging and what others think... we may do something we never thought we'd do. Catching craziness early matters. It's easier to apologize for blowing smoke up someone's ass, than it is to apologize (to their family) for blowing their head off.

So, what can you do?

It starts with taking care of you.

It starts with addressing your own fears: the ones that are currently destabilising you and making it impossible to think straight, sleep well, or take any meaningful action.

To halt a narcissist's power on the outside, we need to loosen their grip on us on the inside.

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1. This means identifying and healing the root of your fears.

The root of your fears is not the narcissist you're dealing with right now. Yes, the person in your face right now is scary, but, chances are, they are activating old fears and experiences that were going on when you were little. Dig there. Start there.

2. Take your focus off of trying to convince everyone else.

It's mostly a waste of time. Instead, identify a long-term survival strategy: if and when other people do wake up, you want to still be standing to be able to join them in assertive action. (Alternatively: connect with people outside of your immediate social circle who are *already* convinced)

3. Connect with your anger.

Hit pillows. Scream in pillows. Clean up all the "anger is bad" stuff that you've internalised and that is blocking your energy. If you want to take assertive action then you'll need your anger.

What you *don't* need is a big implosion, or spontaneously bursting into flames because you've been holding in your feelings for so long.

4. I'll say it again: "Consciously heal your own wounds: look at them, feel the pain, learn to move through those experiences instead of keeping them locked inside like unstable ammunition."

5. Stop trying to figure out their "deeper strategy".

Stop feeling into their message (they are emotional manipulators). Instead, record the facts: what did they do, what did they say? Don't let a narcissist confuse you.

Don't give them control over their own story. Their story is erratic, incomplete and full of bull shit. Yet, left up to them, they will somehow "talk a banana straight" (as we say in Dutch) and find a way to make their latest version of events seem plausible.

6. Use what you know and what else you can learn about narcissism as the best predictor of their behaviour.

After all, it's all about them. Narcissists are not that confusing, not really. They are just so outrageous that it's hard to accept how they really operate.

They are trying to further their own agenda for status /power /influence. They do this by projecting an image of success. This is what truly matters to them, everything else is just a tool.

When you understand what they want most, you understand how to influence them: their inner decision process is always along these lines: will this get me more status /influence /make me look good? Every narcissist has their own specific brand of this of course, but that is their weak spot.

They won't do something intuitive and unexpected to serve the common good, their ultimate agenda is always to serve themselves. This means that when you accept who they are, and you present them with two options, you should be able to accurately predict which one they'll pick, every single time.

That's the power you can have: you can be one step ahead of them. What you *can't* do is make them change what they base their decisions on.

So you can't make them invest in equality for the sake of equality. You *can* make them invest in equality if they believe that doing so will improve their social status and power.

You can't make them come up with a truly decent plan. You *can* present a decent plan to them in a way that makes them look like a genius, let them take the credit, swallow your pride and rejoice for having influenced them in the best way possible.

Sometimes, you can also expose them. You can lure them into a juicy trap, something that is so tempting to them (but so clearly despicable to others) that they will "out" themselves in front of a group. They can get so caught up in the bling bling of the status-increasing possibility in front of them, that they will temporarily forget to calculate how this will make them look to others.

You can also wait for them to out themselves and then ask an innocent question that highlights that fact: "So, from what you just said, I understand that since it's obviously *very important* that you personally* represent our company at the televised event - the one with the mayor and other important people- we will unfortunately have to cancel the charity event coming Friday, right? Would you like me to call everyone or just send a group email to let the volunteers and women from the women's shelter know?" (and yes, that is a "based on a true story" example).

**in this example, there were plenty of other people who could have been a good representative at the televised event. It was not necessary to cancel the charity event. Yet, the narcissist in question literally pushed everyone and everything out of the way so that they could meet the mayor and be on t.v. ... Just sayin'.*

When you're dealing with a narcissist, you have to master your own "training circle" first.

This clip from the movie "The Mask of Zorro" explains that concept really well. Zorro - the pupil - in this clip can't wait to run out and get retribution. With his current skill set and uncontrolled rage, that would mean getting himself killed. To be effective, he needs to train within literally a small circle of influence first. He needs to master himself and his own issues first. To be able to challenge his opponent, he needs to transform.

In dealing with a narcissist, there's no point running out there all righteous and brave and then getting blasted to bits. You need to be able to stay standing in the face of everything they will throw at you. When you can do that, you can challenge them.

It's not fair, but it is what it takes (thankfully you don't need to be able to do push-ups though!)

Do You Overemphasize Your Imperfections?

Are there relatively small things that you do or say or have, that make you super insecure once you start focusing on them?

Friends tell you they have no idea what you're going on about. You're fine! You don't do X. You don't have a monstrous face. Etc.

You know they're right, rationally speaking but somehow it just doesn't feel like they are right. Once you start honing in on your flaws, they are so huge that you wonder how anyone could miss them!

Let me ask you something else... did you have a very critical parent? Someone who, when you felt good about yourself, would point to something that was "wrong" about you and that you'd failed to notice? Maybe it was your hair, maybe it was how you expressed yourself. Maybe it was how you chose to dress. Maybe it was how you decided to put away the dishes. You got criticised, so clearly, you "missed" something important. Perhaps you decided you'd try harder next time to catch your flaws...

If both of these points resonate for you, then here's what might be going on: you were conditioned to look for small things you'd missed that were wrong about you. If you could spot those things before your parent did, you could save yourself the humiliation of having it be pointed out publicly. You also got to save yourself from unexpected disappointment: feeling good about yourself and then be taken down a notch. Being the first to spot your own flaws gave you back a sense of control. Much like M&M in the movie 8 Mile where he criticises himself, taking away the opponent's ammunition.

Victory! Right? Except now you have that critical negative person on the inside, 24/7.

So while doing this helped you save face, it's hurting you in the long run. If you have this critical parent around a lot still, it's time to tell them to shove it. If they're not around anymore, then there's no need to prepare for them. Either way, it's time to let this critical self-assessment go.

Here's how you do it:

In moments when you feel bad because you've spotted something small and "very wrong" with you, know that you are doing a few things:

1. You are coming from the assumption that there is something wrong with you - "that's just a given! All you need to do is figure out what..."

Painful right? If you can see that for what it is, a lose-lose way of thinking, that is not even accurate (trust loving friends over your own inner critic!) then you can start to actively question if it's true. What if there is nothing wrong with you? What if you're just stuck in a habit?

If you can accept that, then move on to step 2.

2. Realise that you've been making use of an amazing ability to focus and zoom in. This is a great skill to have! It's like googlemaps inside your brain: there's the earth... and there's your street!

The problem is though, the more you zoom in, the more you lose perspective. If you start staring at a piece of trash on the street and you give it all your attention, you'll start to feel bad about your neighborhood. Right? Suddenly *everything* seems crappy and filthy.

But, it's just ONE small piece of trash! Zoom out! Zoom out!

Focus is a great skill to have, yet the more you zoom in, the more you can lose perspective too.

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If you feel bad about a perceived flaw, chances are it's because you're too honed in on it. You treat that tiny piece of trash like it is the whole earth. It's not. Zoom out, look at the beautiful river too. Look at the city park. Look at all of it, not just the small piece of trash.

When you start to zoom out, you'll be able to see that "in the bigger scheme of things" the thing you were so worried about is just a small detail. Other people don't really notice! They see the whole you. Or at least, they see a bunch of things about you, not just that one tiny issue. If you go around pointing it out to people though, who knows, they might start zooming in on it too.

So don't try to make others see the flaw you see. Check with friends once, if they don't see it or they see it but point out that it's a small issue, then use the steps above to zoom out. It's a small detail. It doesn't have the importance you were taught to assign to it by your critical parent.

Oh, and one more thing: people who always have something negative to say about others... it's not about you. It's not about what you actually are or do. It's about them feeling bad and looking for a reason.

If you're a pretty decent person overall, they won't have anything "big" to pin it on. So instead, they'll find the tiniest of issues, blow it out of proportion, and then make it seem like this "fault" of yours is creating problems for them. They "love" you so much, but oh, if only you weren't so [fill in the blank]! It's just another way to make things your fault. If it wasn't for your hair, you'd be so perfect and lovable right

now! Guess what, even if you “corrected” your hair, they’d instantly find something else to criticise.

It’s b.s. Don’t do this to yourself. If you end up blowing something about yourself out of proportion, zoom back out. Then look at how you’re feeling. Insecure? Criticised? Anxious?

A feeling or situation set off this “defend against other people spotting flaws” mechanism. As you zoom in, you just feel worse though. You’re literally preparing for the worst. Yet, if someone alienates you because of your hair, or your nose, or the word you used, or the way you snort when you laugh... are they worth fretting over? If people can’t relate to, like you or appreciate you because of something minor, then they’re just not your people. Chances are, they are like that parent OR you are afraid that they will be (even if they totally aren’t!).

It’s much better to zoom out, see the bigger picture of you, give yourself some love, and go out and see how you’ll be treated. How you’re treated over minor issues tells you a lot about the other person. It does not necessarily tell you anything about you at all.

In the end, this whole self-criticism is a way to try to get love. In a very complicated way. You learned - by means of a dangling carrot - that love was almost available for you... if only you’d be perfect!

That’s a lie. It’s a ruse. It’s a con-artist trick. The person telling you this doesn’t have the goods. They don’t have the love. But as long as they can convince you that they do, and that it’s your fault that you’re not getting the love... they can string you along.

Look at it like an empty promise. “Oh, I will pay your education for you, if you give me X”. Then X turns out to be something unachievable. Meanwhile, you think: this person is so great, they are willing to pay for my education! You think you have a pretty good relationship with this person. You never discover that they don’t even have the money. You never discover they have huge loans and are in debt! You never discover it, because they keep fabricating new conditions and new clauses so that “regretfully” they just can’t give you the money, because you did something wrong.

It’s easier to see with money, than with love. Yet, love is not some kind of “achievement reward”. If it’s presented as such, there is no love there in the first place.

Don’t buy into the idea that you’re not lovable because of some small imperfection.

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Give yourself a hug right now. Do something nice for yourself. The “only perfect people get love” story is just that, a story. It has nothing to do with love. People who think they can dole out love this way have no idea what love actually is.

They don’t have the goods. Stop looking to them to give you something and give yourself what you need instead. I know it’s not the same, but it’s a start. What you give yourself is something you can control, even if it’s hard. What other people do or don’t give to you is something you don’t control, ESPECIALLY with dangling-carrot people.

You need some love right now, find a way to give it to you. You deserve it not because you’re perfect. You deserve it because you’re a human being and human beings need love.

