

# No, People Aren't Fine Just the Way They Are

I remember being amused in my college philosophy classes that ancient philosophers like Plato considered the sphere the shape of perfection. I had spent a lot of time (and still do today) trying not to be spherical.

Throughout years of struggling with my weight I have noticed something perverse happening in myself. Just when I make some real progress toward my goals, it only takes a particularly well-meaning compliment to start the negative thoughts: What? Wasn't I good enough before? I then find myself taking comfort in food, taking refuge in sedentary habits, and, in a sort of "loyalty" to my former self, eventually just giving up on my desired goals. A vicious cycle restarts because it actually is not all that easy to really love yourself as you are.

After discovering this common pattern, I began to ask, What is going on here?

The truth is that bitter and vindictive individuals sometimes do seek to hurt us by implying mean things in the guise of compliments. If I am certain that the compliments are not backhanded, then I must face that I have turned kind words from kind people into hurtful weapons against myself in my own mind, and in this situation, I am ultimately the cause of my own discouragement. Regardless of the intent of the compliments (innocent or not) I must not let my thoughts about the words sabotage my goals. Don't believe everything you think!

This leads to further questions: Should we love ourselves as we are? Or should we constantly be striving to be better than our current state? The wisdom of the ancients and the

observations of my own life suggest both. Dr. Jordan Peterson, a clinical psychologist, likes to say: “Do not let who you are get in the way of who you could become.”

The truth about you is something only God really knows. We want to know that we are both loved and lovable as we are, but all by itself, that notion is ultimately depressing. Not only does perpetual rest create a more spherical and less perfect human, it does not ultimately satisfy. We need struggle and striving and adversity. As Dr. Peterson points out, “all positive emotion is the fruit of the striving toward goals. No striving = no positive emotion.” In essence, human nature is not satisfied by satisfaction. This means some serious depression can be linked to the idea of “I’m just fine the way I am.”

Dr. Jordan Peterson, in his book [\*12 Rules for Life\*](#), presents Rule #2: “Treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping.” In other words, I should care for myself not like a vindictive tyrant but as a kind parent who knows the best and worst of me. No lasting self-improvement will come from self-hatred, but no real positive emotion will be gained without striving. Recognizing someone’s great potential is high praise, even if that someone is yourself.

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