

ANTOINETTA VOGELS

*What's Wrong
With Me?*

A HEALTHY SENSE OF SELF
GUIDE TO FINDING TRUE HAPPINESS



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What's Wrong with Me?

A Guide to Finding True Happiness for Your Self

Many people in the world ask themselves the question: “What’s wrong with me?” The answer often lies in childhood, when you may have experienced emotional neglect, and you may not even be aware of it.

People who experience emotional neglect or trauma in childhood can experience a more difficult time as adults.¹ They don’t have the same core Sense of Self as those who grew up in a supportive environment with conscientious caregivers.

Issues like lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, addiction to approval, and problems developing and maintaining healthy relationships can persist throughout a person’s life when their basic needs for attention are not met in childhood. The resulting feelings of emptiness and hopelessness can make a person who suffers from a [Lack of Sense of Self](#) feel as though there is something fundamentally wrong with them. If you think that way, know that you are not alone.

Parents often pass on what they know to their children, and if they grew up with emotional neglect, they could unintentionally continue that negative pattern in their parenting habits. You may have grown up with caregivers who were either emotionally needy or emotionally unavailable and did not help you grow into a person who loves yourself and has a clear sense of who you are.

It could very well be because they do not possess these healthy traits themselves, and they did not have the ability to provide you with the necessary skills to develop them within yourself.

“Unlike abuse, emotional neglect isn’t something that happened to you—it’s something that didn’t happen. It’s a parent’s failure to notice, attend to, or respond appropriately to a child’s feelings.” – Dr. Jonice Webb, Ph.D.

Ideally, your parent (or any person who has a hand in raising you) can help you draw out your talents and inclinations and then work with you to turn those into skills you can use

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<http://theconversation.com/how-childhood-trauma-can-affect-mental-and-physical-health-into-adulthood-77149>

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

to succeed in life. But when you don't get that support from your caregiver, you miss the chance to learn who you are as you grow up, and it can leave you feeling lost.

Children who experienced emotional neglect or trauma can feel that it's their fault. Perhaps you grew up with the feeling that you fell short of your parents' expectations—whether their judgment was spoken or implied. As a child, you quickly learned that your parents focused on their own lives and they wanted you, the child, to not upset their routines.

You wanted them to connect with you, to show that they cared for you, and not to get mad at you so easily. You may have only received affection when you learned how to score their approval. Gaining your parents' approval then became your goal when all you truly wanted was to feel acknowledged, accepted, loved, and valued as your own person, which is exactly what children need to develop a healthy [Sense of Self](#) (SoS).

Maybe, in hindsight, you can now see how you sacrificed what you wanted in your life so you could please your parents and keep them content. Or maybe you didn't even get a chance to develop the part of yourself that could recognize what you want. The drive to win your parents' approval can seep far into your adult life and influence the way you act professionally, as a friend, as a partner, and later as a parent yourself.

If you grow up in an environment where you are prevented from being yourself, it can interfere with your ability to learn who you are as an individual. It may lead to frequent bouts of unreasonable anger, compulsive perfectionism, and persistent insomnia, among other issues. It can lead to a general sense of dissatisfaction or unhappiness in any or all areas of your life.

There Are Two Types of People, Which One Are You?

There are two types of people in the world: people with a naturally developed sense of themselves and those who lack that vital tool—either entirely or partially.

People with a clear sense of themselves are more likely to succeed. They have more peace of mind, can focus on what they are doing with clear intentions, and therefore achieve desired results with greater ease. They are equipped to develop and maintain healthy, long-lasting relationships. They are happy. And most importantly, they continue this positive pattern when raising their children.

However, if you experienced emotional neglect in childhood, you may be missing that clear sense of yourself. You might not even be aware of it and have no explanation for all the unfortunate mishaps and obstacles you find too often in your path. You'll also be more likely to experience challenges such as addiction to approval, anger issues, loneliness, disease, ongoing issues with money and professional success, and a lack of genuine connection with others.

How Strong Is Your Sense of Self?

Do you have clarity about who you are, what you want, and why you deserve it? Are you free to be fully there for the people in your life? Or does winning the approval of others play an essential role in the choices you make?

Can you recognize this behavior in yourself? Can you identify it in someone you know? How much does it affect your relationships?

You were born to live as your Self, not as an extension of your parents. Your life's purpose is not to complete or repeat their history. If you grew up feeling this way, try not to judge your parents too harshly.

Your parents and their parents before them likely did the best they could, based on their upbringing and circumstances, as well as taking common parenting practices of the time into account. There is nothing that can be done to change the past and blaming others won't make you feel any better. You survived it. You adapted to it, and it has made you who you are now.

Children learn from a very young age that there are things they need to do to get their most basic needs met. They learn how to adapt to survive to adulthood. And as a result, some develop an overwhelming addiction to approval.

Addiction to Approval as a Survival Mechanism

Are you addicted to approval?

- Is it difficult to say no when you fear you will disappoint someone?
- Can you freely and with courage do your own thing when you choose to, regardless of outside validation?
- Did you feel supported, as a child, in becoming who you were, or did you experience pressure to be different?
- When one or both of your parents were not pleased with your behavior or choices, did you still feel "seen" by them?

In other words:

- Do you struggle to get your work done within a timeframe that is self-imposed without any apparent reason?

- Do you find yourself frantically trying to get through your to-do list, and do you beat yourself up if you can't get everything done?
- Do you lie awake at night worrying about how you can become the person you want others to see you as?
- Do you experience insecurity or jealousy in your relationships?

If you answered YES to one or more of those questions, it could be an indication that you depend on the quality of your achievements to determine your self-worth. Maybe you feel you have to be perfect: the perfect parent, the ideal spouse, and especially the perfect son or daughter.

Maybe, without even being aware of it, you assume that reaching some level of perfection is the only way you would be seen and heard and taken into account by others in your life, and even within society as a whole. Along with that perceived need comes a tremendous amount of anxiety . . . not being able to succeed, not being able to function, not being able to sleep . . .

Having a Strong Sense of Self Is Necessary

How can you ever come to depend on your Self to guide you in making fulfilling life choices if you weren't provided with the support you needed to develop a sense of who you are from the time you were born? If you grew up in an environment where it was not okay to be your own person, you come to rely upon something else to set your goals and guide the decisions you make in each stage of your life. And that "something else" colors your perceptions about your potential and your sense of worthiness.

By now you may understand how experiencing childhood emotional neglect can prevent you from forming a Sense of Self. Instead, you developed a desperate need for approval and validation. But pay attention here! If the need to get approval runs your life, it influences your day-to-day experiences at home, at work, and in your relationships.

Walk up to a mirror and look yourself in the eyes. Who do you see? Is this the person you are living for? Is this the person whose passion and skills you are inspired by; the person you love with your whole heart? Do you see this person as your unique connection to the outside world? Is this person truly your own best friend?

If not, then who do you see in the mirror? Who are you trying to please and what do you expect to get from that? Is there someone else at the steering wheel of your life? Are you maybe even enabling this person to take over? Do you feel you have been trying your hardest but still can't seem to make things go your way? Are you exhausted from chasing your goals and feel like you're almost ready to give up?

This whole mindset is likely to be the source of your battles with negative emotions, sleeplessness, relationship issues, and even some of your physical ailments. If you ever feel like your life is unraveling or careening out of control, this could be the underlying cause.

I developed the [Sense of Self Method](#) after my years of hard work and self-discovery led me to uncover my true Self. I wanted to create a program for people who also needed help developing an inner core of strength and resilience, which can only be gained through having a healthy sense of Self.

My knowledge of the crucial role a Sense of Self plays in a person's health, well-being, and success did not come easily. I was a musician in one of the top Dutch orchestras, and my job required a single-minded focus and continuous practice, just like a professional athlete.

When I realized I was dependent on the results of my performances for approval and validation, I finally understood the reason why I would so quickly explode into anger when anything interfered with my compulsive practicing. Before that discovery, I used to rationalize: "If you want to do something well, you have to work hard at it, right?" Therefore, nothing seemed out of the ordinary to me. At least not until I had my first baby and I was suddenly unable to sleep!

Finding the cause of my insomnia was quite a challenge. Doctors couldn't help me because I refused to take medication. I didn't want to be numb or knocked unconscious by drugs that couldn't help me truly sleep. So, there was only one way out: looking at my psyche and finding out what was going on. Through many years of introspection, I was able to strip away the layers that my real Self had been buried under. I wanted to know WHY I did WHAT I did. What made me WHO I was? And ultimately, I wanted to decide for myself who I would become.

I found that motivation and Sense of Self are closely tied together. The emotional neglect I experienced in childhood was the cause of my addiction to approval. Questioning my motivations led me to recondition myself, which finally helped me to develop the self-confidence that has changed my life for the better and still empowers me today.

The Key to Happiness

To feel fulfilled and experience a happy and successful life, you must have a strong Sense of Self. The secret to overcoming the issues caused by childhood emotional neglect starts with awareness and the desire to recondition your mental and emotional habits. Developing a Sense of Self is a challenge, but it's well worth the effort.

To put an end to destructive patterns of behavior, you need to dive deep within and figure out the source. Only then can you truly start to heal the wounds of your past as you work

towards establishing a stronger Sense of Self. This process can be significantly helped along by my book and [self-paced online course](#), which provide you with insights and activities designed to guide you along the path of discovering who you truly are.

This journey is about recognizing the events and outside factors that affected you, healing from trauma, and building a new core Sense of Self that you can rely on for the rest of your life. You can rid yourself of the excessive stress that comes from living up to unrealistic expectations and, in return, have a much happier and more successful life than you ever thought possible.

Let's get started on your journey to restoring your Sense of Self so you can live the life you always wanted; the life you deserve!

Buy my book, [The Motivation Cure](#), on Amazon today and be eligible to receive the whole Sense of Self package, which includes: *The Guided Journal*, access to the exclusive *Healthy Sense of Self Method Online Course* and community, and the *Course Workbook* for the special price of \$200.

[DISCOVER YOUR TRUE PURPOSE](#)

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