

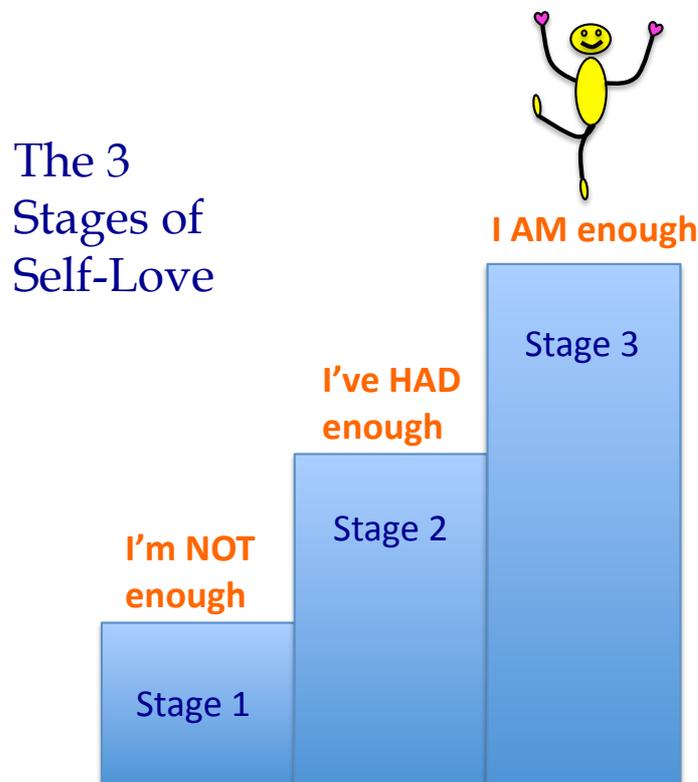
# Dr David R Hamilton

## World Summit Worksheet

### The 3 Stages of Self-Love

When we have difficulties with self-love it is not because of something that's inherently wrong with us, nor because we were born deficient in any way. **When we struggle with self-love it's because we've learned to doubt our worth**, and this learning usually takes place during the first 6 or 7 years of life.

Many adults find themselves having to learn to love themselves and the process takes them through the 3 stages of self-love, as shown below.



**Stage 1** can be summed up as a state of consciousness that says, 'I am *not* enough'. With a willingness to learn to love themselves, most quickly reach **stage 2**, which reflects a state of consciousness of, 'I've *had* enough'. In time, and with a little perseverance, we pop out of the other end into a state of consciousness that says, 'I *am* enough', which is **stage 3**. For a more full explanation of the 3 stages and moving through them, see Appendix I.

## Exercise 1: Where I learned it from

Read the article in Appendix I at the end of this worksheet and then answer the following questions:

- 1) Which stage of self-love would you currently place yourself at?
- 2) What about your parents? Which stage would you place them at? What about your siblings?

We tend to learn our level of self-love from the people around us. Often we learn through **a) Being shamed, b) Being criticized, or c) Osmosis**. Osmosis is where we learn the habits of the people we spend most time with, so if your primary parent lacked in self-love then chances are you'd learn the same habits of thinking, behavior, and even how to interact with certain kinds of people from her / him.

Even though I had written 7 previous books in the self-help / mind-body-spirit genre, I personally struggled with self-love. Like many people, I was able to pretend that everything was OK in my life, but many of my personal stresses and struggles, from difficulties with finances, relationships, self-confidence, self-belief, comparing myself to others, and feeling self-conscious, boiled down to my own self-love issues.

As a scientist, I took a unique approach to dealing with these. My approach recognized:

- 1) **That a lack of self-love is learned,**
- 2) **That learning really just distills down to the formation of connections in the brain, and**
- 3) **That these brain connections can be rewired at any age**

The re-wiring of brain connections is called **neuroplasticity**. It basically means that the brain is *not* hardwired, as most people assume, but is actually changing all the time. Our brain wiring changes in response to what we learn, how we think, and even how we move our bodies.

One of the powerful ways to build our self-love is to harness the power of our body language to rewire the brain.

## Fake It Until You Make It: The Harvard Power Pose

Most people are aware that our emotions affect our muscles. For instance, you smile if you feel happy and frown if you feel, say, frustrated by something. But you don't feel happy, however, and then consciously *remember* to smile. Smiling is a reflex reaction because the muscles that govern smiling are connected to the emotional areas of your brain. It's automatic when you're happy.

Similarly, your shoulders tense when you feel anxious. You don't feel anxious and then consciously remember to tense your shoulders. It happens automatically. It's a reflex reaction because the muscles that control your body language are connected to your brain's emotional areas.

What we don't always realize is that it goes the other way too. Just as our emotions affect our muscles, so our muscles affect our emotions. It's a two-way street. It's called a '**Bi-directional**' relationship.

**Amazingly, simple alterations in how we hold and move our bodies can have significant effects on how we feel.**

In research at Harvard University, led by Amy Cuddy, volunteers were asked to stand in either a 'Power Pose' or a 'weak pose' for two minutes. A power pose is regarded as an open body posture. Think 'Wonder Woman' - hands on hips, legs apart, spine erect, shoulders relaxed, head straight and eyes fixed straight ahead. A weak pose, on the other hand, is a closed posture - perhaps arms folded, shoulders a little slumped, spine not quite straight, eyes looking down.

The volunteers in the study had saliva samples taken before and immediately after the two minutes was up and the scientists measured testosterone (women have it too) and cortisol. Testosterone, in both males and females, is related to feelings of self-confidence. Cortisol is a stress hormone.

After just two minutes, testosterone was up by 20% in those who did the power poses and cortisol dropped by 25%. It was the opposite in those who did the weak poses. They experienced elevation in cortisol levels and drops in testosterone. In other words, a two minute power pose was enough to actually boost a person's confidence and reduce their stress.

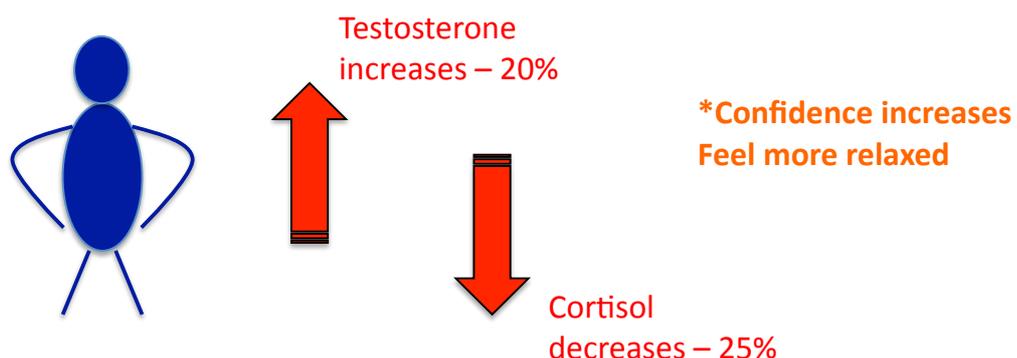
In other words:

**Power Pose creates confidence and reduces stress**

**Weak pose reduces confidence and creates stress**

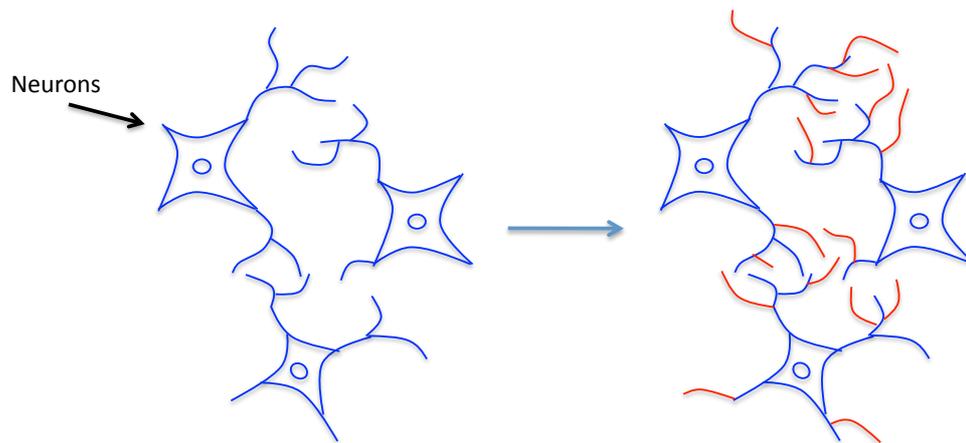
The diagram below illustrates the results from the study:

**Effects of 2-minute power pose on hormone levels:**



# How to Use Your Body to Wire Your Brain

**The study showed that what we do with our bodies affects how we feel.** But we can go further. Consistent practice of holding and moving our bodies in a new way actually wires the brain. Research in neuroplasticity shows us that if we practice something consistently then it becomes a habit. The reason it becomes a habit is because the practice actually wires the brain. Brain cells (neurons) actually grow new branches on account of what we practice. The diagram below shows how neuroplasticity takes place:



## Neuroplasticity

Consistent movement (or imagined movement) causes **actual** physical changes in brain structure

The red lines are new branches on the brain cells (neurons) that have been created by our muscle movements.

**How can this build our self-love?** When we lack self-love it is reflected in how we hold and move our bodies, especially in challenging situations, stressful environments, and around certain people.

So if we can consciously work on our body language – how we sit, stand, and move – we will quickly start to create neuroplasticity in the brain. And the important thing here is that **we are creating neuroplasticity in the areas of the brain that control our self-love.**

## Exercise 2: Your “I AM ENOUGH” Pose

1) Find a quiet place and practice adjusting your posture until you find a way of standing that says, “*I am enough*”. It might be a stance like Wonder Woman or Superman (if you’re male). Focus on your spine, shoulders, face, and breath. When you find a way of standing you’re happy with, hold that pose for 2 minutes.

2) Now practice walking in a way that says, *"I am enough."* Notice your rate of walking and how you actually move your body. Do this for 1 minute.

3) If you want, you can also practice speaking in a way that says, *"I am enough."* Notice your rate of speech and your vocal tone. Do this for 1 minute. You might even imagine saying things you want to say to certain people. The important thing here is not only *what* you are saying, but that you are conveying it in a controlled, confident, comfortable way that reflects, *"I am enough."*

4) Practice every day for a month and see what happens.

By doing this, you are creating a new habit in how you hold and move your body and this habit is being wired into your brain. With enough consistent practice, as the brain wiring takes root, your self-love will improve.

## More information:

**My website:** [www.drdauidhamilton.com](http://www.drdauidhamilton.com) My website has lots of free content, including over 100 articles covering a range of topics from self-love, how your mind can heal your body, kindness (and my globally read article, 'The 5 Side-Effects of Kindness'), and even how destiny and free will work together. You can also find links to videos of me speaking and details about my online courses.

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/davidrhamiltonphd](http://www.facebook.com/davidrhamiltonphd) I post on my Facebook page every day. I post inspirational content, blogs, videos, and listings of my speaking events.

**Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/drdrhamilton](http://www.twitter.com/drdrhamilton) I tweet inspirational content and also interact with people who tweet me.

**My latest book, 'I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love'** contains 27 practical exercises, including those above, for building and maintaining your self-love.



# Appendix I

## The 3-Stages of Self-Love

David R Hamilton PhD

This is an article Posted on [www.healyourlife.com](http://www.healyourlife.com) on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015

The goal of any self-love work is to reach a space of knowing that, '**I am enough**'; that is, I am enough in all ways, just as I am. I don't need to impress anyone. I don't need to get people to like me. I am Me, right here, right now, authentic, and I love and accept myself just as I am.

That's the aim. It's stage 3 of the 3-stages of self-love. But most people don't honestly live in that space. Most people spend a large part of their time at stage 1, which is '**I am not enough**'.

We're not born that way. There's nothing inherently 'wrong' with any of us. Babies and young children intuitively know that they are enough. We *learn* to doubt our worth, most often during the first 6 or 7 years of our lives. I am *not* enough then becomes an unconscious assumption that we meet the world with, influencing all manner of events, circumstances, and relationships in our lives.

For some, it manifests in difficulty standing up for themselves, giving their power away, or even in struggles with self-belief or self-confidence. Some people experience it in a difficulty finding (or keeping) love. It shows up as financial struggles for others. In some people's lives it shows up as difficulty losing weight or as concerns with their appearance. For many, it's the need to have other people like or accept them. Others are simply very critical of themselves.

But with some determination and patience we reach the second stage of self-love - **I have had enough**. You've simply *had* enough of the way life has been going. 'That's it. I'm done with all this crap', is a common mantra. You're determined to change things. And importantly, you recognize that many of your problems are a consequence of how you think about yourself and how you see yourself in relation to others.

Stage 2 is much higher energy than stage 1. It's characterized by passion and determination, although sometimes even anger, especially if you have been feeling bullied or taken advantage of. It ends right here! Stage 2 is also the stage of insight and clarity and is a time when life-changing decisions are often made.

It's the stage where new relationships are created or some existing ones broken. It's a time where we meet new friends or acquaintances or see the exit of others. It's the stage that can see changes in career or living conditions. It sometimes even brings travel. Stage 2 feels light and free for many, especially if they have felt restricted or held back in their life up until then.

In time, we reach a third stage of self-love. It is the stage of '**I am enough**'. It's characterized by inner confidence and contentment. There is no more struggling to be liked or accepted, no more trying to justify or validate ourselves. It is the stage of authenticity.

It is usually easy to spot people who live at this stage. They have a sort of inner glow. They are kind and patient. They don't try to convince you of their good points and achievements but instead they take an active interest in yours.

Life is not without its challenges at stage 3, of course, because challenges are part of the human experience, but we meet our challenges with a higher consciousness and so the outcomes we experience are more fulfilling.

We all have our personal challenges. I wrote *'I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love'* because I had spent a good part of my life at stage 1, even though I was a self-help author. The irony. :-) I know all too well how it feels to doubt yourself but pretend otherwise. We all do it to some extent. I set out to learn self-love for myself because I personally needed it.

With a little bit of practice, you can learn self-love too. Step 1 is simply being aware that there are 3 stages. Now you know what to aim for.