

“Let’s Talk About…” is a column in our monthly newsletter where we will learn one thing at a time about how we can love others the way they want to be loved. We will learn something each month that helps us understand and respect people who are different from us a little more deeply.

This month, let’s talk about YOU. Summer is a season of family vacations and all sorts of long-awaited adventures, but it can also be an opportunity for rest and rejuvenation as many industries follow the ebb and flow of the school year. This is certainly not the case for every industry; for example, summer is a busy season for landscaping and construction. Still, I’d like to take this opportunity to reflect on how we can best welcome ourselves in our lives.

Consider the golden rule: Love your neighbor as you love yourself. If we are not good at loving ourselves, then we will burn out pretty fast when we try to love others. What does hospitality for oneself look like?

Before we can talk about self-love, we need to spend a minute on self-care. This means recognizing and providing the things that our bodies, minds, and souls need. It may be as simple as building in time for the rest that our bodies, minds, and souls need. Alternatively, it might mean building in time for the activity we need in our lives, whether that activity is exercise or social time or time to complete the whole hygiene routine we know would do our bodies good.

Ah, but when we welcome folks at church, do we focus exclusively on meeting their needs? From what I have seen in our gathering space, we want to create an atmosphere that cares for people above and beyond basic needs. We offer fun quiet bags for children that allow them to participate in worship to the degree that works for them. We have tasty treats for people to enjoy. Most of the year, we have art on the walls to bring joy and inspiration to those who take the time to look. Hospitality for ourselves, then, means more than just making sure we feed our bodies, minds, and souls enough to keep going.

So, how can you show yourself some love this month? No matter whether you’re traveling the globe, enjoying a stay-cation, or working business as usual, here are three simple ways to practice self-love:

1. Use the nice things! I posted on Facebook last weekend about using a pretty spatula instead of the more efficient (and, honestly, functional) one I use most of the time. Do you have beautiful dishes that sit in a cabinet waiting for important guests? Well, you are important! Serve yourself dinner with the fancy tableware and notice if it feels different.
2. Do something just for you. This is the part of self-care and self-love where people start thinking about bubble baths, and a fun bath or a facemask could be great if that’s something you love, but there’s more to this. I used that pretty spatula last weekend to bake a pumpkin pie just for me! If you love crafting or cooking and you usually focus on making things for other people, make something just for you. If you like spending time in nature, set aside a day just for that, regardless of whether other people are available to join you. Maybe it’s a hike in the mountains or a visit to the botanical gardens, or maybe it’s as simple as going for a long walk (or a drive with the windows down) around your neighborhood.
3. Practice gratitude for yourself. Name three things you are grateful for or love about yourself, and get specific! For example, I’m grateful for my ability to see

connections where others don't. I also love the way my hair looks when I first wake up, because it makes me smile and then it cooperates when I need it to behave!

How will you love yourself today?

Our "Let's Talk About..." column is one place where we can help one another learn how to be better allies for all our neighbors. If you have a question you'd like answered, or if there are things you wish others in our congregation better understood about your own marginalized identities or those for whom you are already a strong ally, please submit suggestions to <https://forms.gle/E9eRqZJGLgVagbDZ9> or email me directly at virginiag@smokyhillumc.org.