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### Learning to Love My Best Friend

I have this friend. She is kind and strong and beautifully imperfect. She makes mistakes often, all kinds of them, but I choose to love her regardless. When she is sad I hold her tight, wrapping my arms around her to remind her, even when I can't find the words to help, I am always there to sit with her in the silence.

You see ... her and I have been through a lot together. We've changed over time from the person we once were: the person who came into this world, the person who picked all the dandelions in the front yard every year, the person that made her mother cry herself to sleep one year, the person who almost died her sophomore year of college. We have been through a lot together, but we are still the very best of friends.

We've experienced heartbreak: heart break from lovers, heart break from friends, heart break from family. We've experienced passion, fear, love, and deep deep sorrow. The kind of sorrow that makes you want to curl in on yourself for a very long time. She has stood by me through it all, and I next to her.

The crazy thing is that I haven't always been kind to her. No, I haven't always been kind to her at all. I used to hate her some days, neglecting her when she needed me and refusing to thank her when she helped me through some terrible struggles. I had this idea in my head of who I wanted her to be and what I wanted her to look like, and for a while nothing she did was good enough.

And yet she stayed.

She still lifted me up when I fell and talked me down when I was angry. She carried me to bed when I was so intoxicated that I couldn't remember where I was. She rocked me to sleep when my cries of heartbreak were so rattled that they jumbled the words spilling out of my mouth. She wasn't perfect, no, but she gave me grace when I had given her none; an unconditional love I had yet to understand.

Thinking back on the times I neglected her, I am sorrowful. I want to hug my dear friend and remind her how much I loved her, still do love her, and reassure her that she was, is, and always will be incredible, exceptional, and worthy - worthy of the very best that this life can give.

She is worthy of the very best.

I am worthy of the very best.

She is my best friend.

My soul mate, my confidant.

This friend I have been speaking of? This friend is me.

I believe in treating your body and mind like a best friend, like a dear companion or a sweet little soul you've always known. Our bodies deserve to be loved, but first and foremost by ourselves. For, at the end of the day, you truly are the person you will live with the longest, so get to know yourself.

Learn your flaws and love them equally, though you do not have to condone them. Understand when you need rest, or food, or love, or little bit of adventure. Have courage to let the true you shine through in all that you do, so you don't keep clogging yourself up with fake identities and false personalities. Just let yourself be real.

Then, at the end of the day, give yourself a little hug, smile at your reflection in the mirror, and remind yourself how incredible you are for surviving all that you have come to face so far in this life.