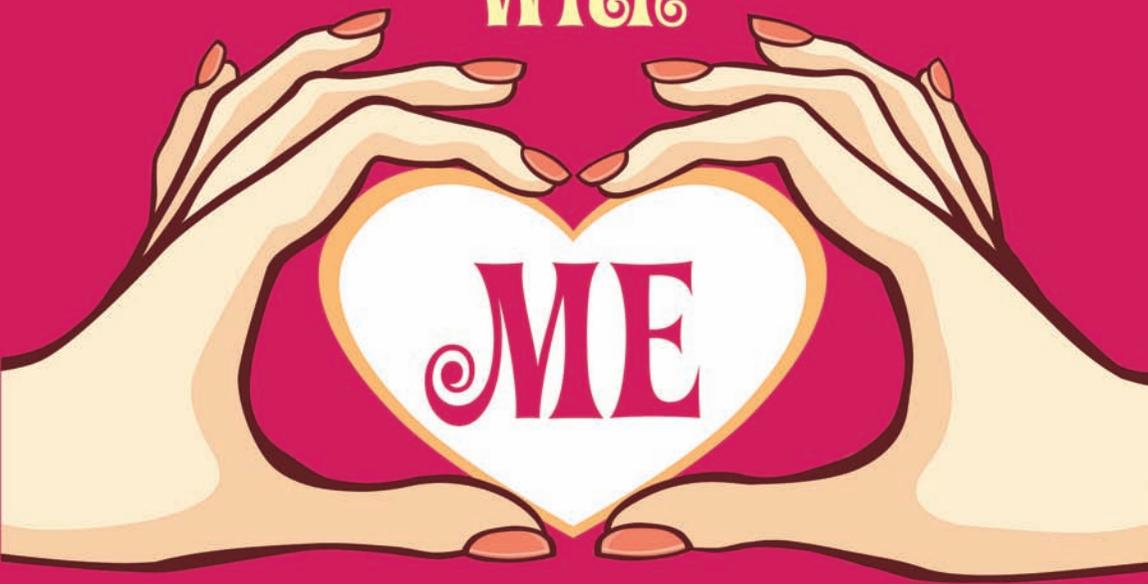


"Written by the Queen of Self-Love herself, this witty, soulful book makes loving yourself not only possible but fun."

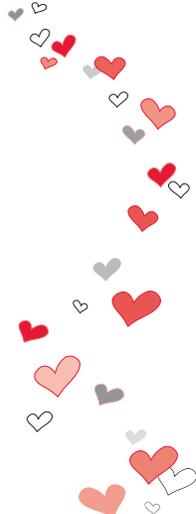
— MARCI SHIMOFF, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Love for No Reason*

CHRISTINE ARYLO

Madly in Love with



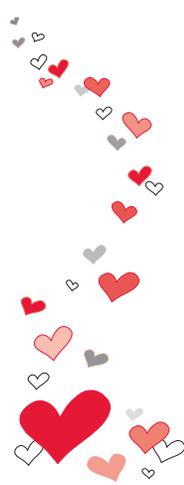
THE DARING ADVENTURE
of becoming your own best friend

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of a curved path of hearts and arrows. The hearts are in various shades of red, pink, and grey, and the arrows are white with black outlines. The path starts at the top left and curves downwards and to the right.

CHAPTER 14

Make a Self-Love Promise

STAY COMMITTED TO CHOOSING
LOVE FOR YOURSELF

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page, consisting of a curved path of hearts and arrows. The hearts are in various shades of red, pink, and grey, and the arrows are white with black outlines. The path starts at the top right and curves downwards and to the left.

Congratulations on lavishing loving on your ten self-love branches! Can you feel the branches and roots of your self-love tree getting stronger? Your relationship with yourself deepening? Your commitment to you solidifying? The really good news is, the love doesn't stop here. It just keeps on growing, every day, for the rest of your life, if you choose. Your self-love tree needs constant care, however, and, just like the trees in your yard, sometimes it will need a good pruning to get it and you growing in the healthiest direction. The more attention you pay to this beautiful tree of yours, the more your love for yourself will grow; and as a result, more love will flow to you. Gardeners use tools to take care of their trees, and you too need tools to care for and grow your self-love tree.

This chapter and the next will give you two of the most powerful tools I know: the self-love promise and the self-love practice. One has the power

to cement a deep level of commitment to yourself to help you make the decisions you must make every day from a place of self-love. The other will help you develop powerful emotional and spiritual strength and stamina, both of which will determine your ability to choose to empower, trust, accept, know, forgive, express, pleasure, and value yourself — or not.

The best way to learn to use any tool is to use it, with intention. Our first step, then, is to get you focused on the branch of self-love most ready and willing to grow, right now. While all ten branches of self-love are critical to the health of your relationship with yourself, if you try to concentrate on all ten at the same time, you will get overwhelmed, your resources will be spread too thin, and your tree will suffer. The best way to ensure you have the most beautiful, blooming tree of self-love, and the best relationship with yourself, is to focus on one branch at a time, putting all your resources — time, energy, money, and love — there. As this branch receives oodles of attention and adoration from you, it will become stronger, you will become stronger, and it will grow and blossom. As a result, the branches surrounding it will also benefit, because they are all connected via the trunk. And as all that love wells up in the center of your tree, the roots of your self-love tree will feel the love and deepen. The entire system will be stronger because you chose to focus on one branch at a time.

ME Moment *Which Branch of Self-Love Will You Grow?*

Now, you may be thinking, “How can I pick just one branch? There are so many that need love.” Or maybe



you're drawing a big blank — no clear choice has emerged. Have no fear, love is here, right inside your heart. Just tune in by using one or all of the following techniques:

1. **Think your way to choosing your branch.** Go back and flip through each of the ten chapters on the self-love branches. Pick the branch with the lowest score on the Self-Love Pulse Checks. If there is a tie, pick whichever one makes you most excited and joy-full, or the one that scares you the most. Either one will give you a thrilling adventure!
2. **Feel your way to choosing your branch.** Flip back to the illustration of the tree of self-love in part 1. Take a moment to take in the entire tree. Look at each of the branches — acceptance, compassion, honesty, esteem, and so on. And instead of thinking your way through the tree, allow yourself to feel your way through. Put your hand on your heart, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Go through your own inner tree of self-love, branch by branch, and allow yourself to feel the health of each branch today. Does it feel healthy and strong? Or does it feel weak and in need of love? Ask the branch most needing your love to show itself. To be guided on a visualization that will help you choose the branch of your self-love tree that needs love most now, go to www.SelfLoveMeditations.com, where you can receive both an audio and a video version.
3. **Divine your way to choosing your branch.** Download a copy of the self-love tree at www.ChooseSelfLove.com and print it out, or open up your book to the self-love tree illustration. Grab a penny, hold it in your hand, and ask this question: “What most needs my love right now?” And then throw the penny up and let it land on the self-love

tree. Whichever branch it lands on or near is the branch to choose. If it lands between two, pick the branch that most excites you, remembering that when one branch is loved, all neighboring branches benefit.

Once you have your self-love branch identified, you are ready to move to the next stage, making a promise that helps you stay committed to that branch all year.

The Self-Love Promise

Now that you have the branch you want to grow, you are ready to make a self-love promise that will help you define and keep a commitment to this part of your relationship with yourself. The promise will make your commitment actionable, tangible, and achievable, and if you stick to it, it will give you a sense of real growth in your ability to love yourself.

What Is a Self-Love Promise?

A self-love promise is a sacred contract between you and you, made from love. It acts as a binding agreement that compels you to choose loving actions toward or thoughts about yourself, and to take bold stands for yourself, no matter what. When life gets hard, and loving yourself seems a million miles away, the vows you've made to yourself will pull you through to the other side, to love. They empower you to choose the path of love even when fear, shame, or obligation demands that you choose it instead. How can a simple promise be so powerful?

Remember a time when you promised to do something for a person

you loved, and how that connection to him or her and the promise of your word energized you and allowed you to follow through? The same thing happens with the self-love promise: it gives you the strength to choose love for yourself. The promise acts as an anchor to keep you connected to the intention behind it. And it gives you the power to find your way back to love for yourself in any situation.

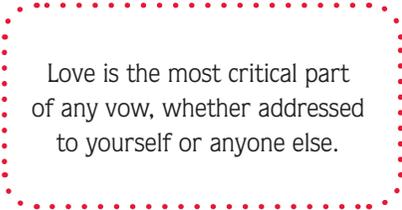
So in moments when you let yourself down, engage in self-destructive habits, or just totally fail, instead of beating yourself up, feeling afraid, alone, or ashamed, or continuing to sabotage yourself, you have another choice — self-love in its many forms, including compassion, honesty, and acceptance. Your loving promises to yourself give you the power and path to choose self-love instead of self-hate, self-criticism, or self-abuse. Over time, as you choose self-love more and more often in your actions, beliefs, and thoughts, your self-love branches will strengthen and your relationship with yourself will soar. One day, the promise you made becomes a vow you keep no matter what. And then you return to your first nature, loving yourself unconditionally.

The Art of the Self-Love Promise

How you *make* a promise is the number one determinant of how well you will actually *keep* the promise. We've been trained to make them to others — from the everyday “Yes, I will do that for you” to the big “Yes, I will marry you” — but most of us are novices when it comes to making and keeping promises to ourselves. And while promises made to others are important, making promises to yourself is essential. But not just any kind of promise. The promises you make to yourself should always create more love.

If you're like most women, on the rare occasions you have made commitments to yourself, they have entailed self-punishing, self-depriving sacrifices, such as not eating sugar, drinking coffee, or engaging in some other activity that you derive pleasure from. We women love to tell ourselves, "This is good for me, no matter if it makes me miserable." And, of course, the sacrificial promise gets broken and we end up beating ourselves up for failing.

How many stress-inducing plans have you made whose results never materialized (think diets)? Or "God-I-promise-I-will-never-again" pleas that never stuck? Or bargains that cost you happiness and pleasure in the present in return for some hoped-for future result? You know the old "I promise that if... happens, then I will..."? Did making bargains like that let you feel better, or worse, about yourself? Rarely do such bargains lead to more love and happiness. Instead we usually gain more fear, guilt, and extra pounds. Why do such promises always go sour? Because their origin is sour. The source of these self-depriving, self-judgmental, *should*-ridden promises is *fear*, *shame*, and *guilt* instead of *love*.



Love is the most critical part of any vow, whether addressed to yourself or anyone else.

If, for example, your goal is to achieve a fit body, there's a big difference between making that promise from a place of self-love and making it from a place of shame and fear. Examples of the two types of promises might look like this:

SHAME-AND-FEAR PROMISES:

"I will lose this extra weight if it kills me."

"I won't eat dessert ever."

“I will eat salad every day for a month.”

“I’ll do whatever it takes not to be fat.”

SELF-LOVE PROMISE:

“I consume healthy foods because my body deserves to be healthy and fit.”

Notice the difference? The first promise is full of self-judgment (I’m fat), is devoid of self-acceptance (I’ll try to morph my body shape into someone else’s body type rather than accept my own), and lacks communication with your body (I’ll eat salad every day even if my body needs something different). The self-love promise, in contrast, comes from self-care, a loving desire to have a fit body so you can be healthy and vibrant. Which one do you think you’d be more likely to stick to; which one is more likely to get you the results you want? The self-love promise, of course! We’ve all tried the shame-and-fear promise, and you know that motivating yourself by “fat fear” never works. Usually you end up feeling worse about yourself, not to mention a few pounds heavier. This is true for all promises to yourself — skip the fear and shame and go for the l-o-v-e! Let’s mark this moment with a commitment to not make fear-riddled, shame-based, or guilt-induced promises ever again.



Daring Act of Self-Love *Clean Up Your Self-Talk*

Imagine that you have a broadcasting station inside you that controls your thoughts and talk. This station broadcasts over two

channels — 88.9 FM FEAR and 108.00 FM LOVE. For the next week, notice when your words — whether you are thinking, feeling, or saying them — are coming from the 88.9 channel and filling your mind, body, or environment with vibes of fear, shame, self-degradation, or anything else that hurts you (or someone else). Be like your own Federal Communications Commission and clean up your station — no fear, shame, or self-degradation allowed!



As soon as you notice that these vibes are trying to make their way onto your airwaves, change your words or thoughts into love. Stop, close your eyes, take a big breath, and think or say the words “I choose love!” and then rephrase the negative statement you made a moment before. Just as if you were changing the dial in your mind or mouth, stop yourself mid-thought or midsentence, if possible, and change your words so that they send waves of love through you. Change your words and thoughts, change your life!

Six Tips for Making Self-Love Promises That Stick

1. **Make the promise for yourself and yourself alone.** Your motivation cannot be to keep a guy or girl, make someone else happy, fit in, or follow along.
2. **Words matter. Choose the words that feel right for you.** Choose words that resonate specifically with your heart and soul. Just as you can hear if a piano is out of tune when you strike a key, so too you can hear and sense if a word is discordant when you say it out loud or write it down. The art is in listening to what feels right, what resonates

for you. You may need to keep writing and rewriting, choosing new words and moving words around. But when you tune in to what you really want to promise, you will feel it as soon as you hear it.

3. **Omit the words *want*, *try*, and *can*. Include the words *I promise* or *I vow*.** *Want*, *try*, and *can* create weak commitments that are, as a result, unsecured anchors, and we want you strongly committed and supported in your self-love promise. Saying “I will try to...” when making a promise is like quitting before starting. Lead your promises with the words *I promise* or *I vow*, and these words will reflect and hold the resonance of your resolve and commitment.
4. **Make the promise visual and verbal.** Promises cannot be thought into existence; they must be stated out loud so the sound vibration can pass through your lips, and your cells can vibrate on the self-love waves. Your brain also needs to see the words through your eyes, allowing you to register this commitment in all the crevices of your mind, so write them down first, and then read them out loud. Pronounce and proclaim! That’s the name of the game.
5. **Promises can be aspirational as long as they are believable.** Some promises will feel like a stretch — and that’s good! Promises have the power to pull you forward into ways of being that you haven’t yet experienced or mastered. So yes, stretch! But don’t lie to yourself. Make sure you can commit to what you’re saying, or your promise won’t pack the power needed to inspire you to keep it. How can you tell the difference? It’s all in the way the words feel coming out of your mouth and landing in your body as you say them out loud. Notice whether, when you say the words, you feel the following:

- ♥ Do you feel grounded and empowered? Are the words resonating in your body, mind, and spirit? Thumbs up!
- ♥ Do you feel queasy or nervous, but as if you can at least sense the possibility of this promise being true? Thumbs up! This is a stretch, but a good one.
- ♥ Do you feel as if you'd really like to make this promise, but that it seems airy and ungrounded? Stop, reword, and restate your promise until you find words that feel as if they land in your body.
- ♥ Or do you feel nothing, or as if hot air is spewing out of your mouth? Stop and check in with yourself. Ask yourself, "What's blocking me? What am I afraid will happen if I take this promise?" Then ask, "What promise am I willing to make right now?"

6. **Be willing, not perfect.** Most of the time when you make a promise, you won't know what that promise will actually require you to do or become. Of course, you will have a feeling about what you are stepping into, but your mind cannot begin to even imagine how life will test you and gift you because of this deeper level of commitment to yourself. It is not important to have a plan or pretend that you are perfectly ready to meet every challenge you'll face. What is important is that you are willing. If you are *willing*, you are ready.

ME Moment *What Self-Love Promise Are You Willing to Make?*

You know which branch is ready to grow, and you understand the art of making a self-love promise. Now the only question is, what do you want to promise

yourself? Use the following four questions to get clear on what vow you are ready and willing to take today to carry you forward and bring you more love and a better relationship with your most important partner, yourself! With this greater clarity, proceed into your magical, fantastical ritual of the self-love promise.

1. What do I need to say no to in order to grow this self-love branch?
2. What do I need to say yes to in order to grow this self-love branch?
3. What would make me super-happy to experience as a result of this self-love branch's new growth?
4. What promise comes immediately to mind, given all of the above?"

Don't censor or edit yourself; just say or write the first thing that bubbles up: "I promise..." This is the self-love promise that you will craft into a super-love-powered promise that can keep you coming back to love for yourself again and again!

Complete a Self-Love Promise Ceremony

Every year on February 13, the international day of self-love, people from all over the world pause to choose a self-love branch and make a self-love promise to themselves that they will keep all year long. This one promise, which they may make in the privacy of their own homes or in a roomful of others at a Madly in Love with ME Celebration or self-love event, becomes an anchor for the entire year, empowering them to choose love again and again, no matter what. To join us for these self-love

celebrations each year, be sure to go to www.ChooseSelfLove.com and sign up to be a Love Ambassador.

While you are invited to join us every February 13 for the rest of your life, you don't have to wait until the next one to make a promise. You can make self-love promises anytime you like. The great thing about self-love promises is that they are cumulative — new ones build on the ones you've already made. Use the following six action steps to make your specific self-love promise to grow your chosen self-love branch:

Act 1. Get Present

Ideally, when making a promise, put yourself in a space where you can soak in the words and feel this commitment in your heart. A quiet and beautiful space is always nice: candles and low lights, or outside in nature. Being with yourself, being present, is required — as is, of course, being completely unplugged. Doing without electronic devices and other gadgets (except those needed to create music) during this event is essential. Clearing space for yourself physically, emotionally, and energetically and creating beauty in your surroundings sets a sacred tone, fitting for an event such as making a promise to yourself. You wouldn't make a promise to your best friend while checking emails or helping your kids with homework. No, you'd be present. Give yourself the same respect. And of course, if you need to make a self-love promise pronto while in an airplane, at a restaurant, or in the car, go for it. Choosing a time when you're by yourself is better, but if you're in a public space or with other people, simply create your own private Idaho, close your eyes, take a breath, and imagine everyone else disappearing. Then imagine sitting by yourself in

your favorite place in the world. This will let you feel present, and then you can continue.

Act 2. Pronounce the Promise

Say the words out loud. Be as present as you can, and allow yourself to hear and feel the words as they come out of your mouth and vibrate through your body. As you say the words, ask yourself, “Do I mean them, really?” Can you say to yourself, “Yes, I want to make this promise. I can make this promise. But most important, I am willing, even though I may not know just yet what this vow entails”? Empty word calories won’t do, but willingness will.

This first promise you make is a mark in the sand that says, “I am committed to loving myself and growing that love.” If you’ve already been actively loving yourself for some time, great! You are ready to deepen your relationship with, and love for, yourself, and taking this new vow will only strengthen your self-love commitment. Married couples renew old vows and take new ones all the time, so why shouldn’t you?

Act 3. Pick Your Words

Because this is your promise, the words have to feel right for you. Always test the words out for yourself. First, write the promise down that you uncovered in the previous ME Moment. Then say the promise out loud a few times, changing the words as needed so that it feels right for you. Cross out words, put in new ones — whatever you need to do to get these words jiving on your love vibration. Once you have the right love words for you, proceed. (Note for the perfectionist: Do not obsess over finding

precisely the right word. *Right* in this case means one that is “in alignment with love” or one that “resonates with love.” You’ll know the right words when they feel good and strong in your heart. This is not a mental exercise, nor is it anything that you can do wrong. Trust yourself, tune into love, and have fun!

Here are some sample promises that people have made on Madly in Love with ME Day:

Self-trust: “I promise to *always* trust *me* (on the deepest level in my heart) totally and completely.”

Self-expression: “I promise to value myself and my self-expression no matter what!”

Self-pleasure: “I promise to make sure I am having *fun* in my life, no matter how busy I am.”

To see more self-love promises from people around the world, you can stop by www.ChooseSelfLove.com and get inspired.

Act 4. Make Your Promise Pretty

Beauty is a sign of self-love, so unless you are in an airport and in need of an emergency self-love promise, and all that’s handy is a cocktail napkin, treat yourself well and write this promise prettily — put it in your journal, on a note card, or even a Post-it Note (pink, green, or yellow, three of the colors of self-love). Make it pretty enough that you’d like to visit it again. Seeing a promise over and over allows it to seep deeper into your cells.

Act 5. Seal the Deal — Proclaim Your Promise

How you make a promise has a lot to do with how successfully you will keep it, so do not skip this step. Do treat this step as a sacred promise to your heart and soul. Put yourself into a “promise state of mind” by creating a quiet space where you can be with yourself. Great places include in front of a mirror so you can see your face, or lying down, or sitting somewhere that feels supercomfy and intimate.

If you are in front of a mirror, keep your eyes open and look into them while you repeat your unique promise three times. Otherwise, close your eyes, put your hand on your heart, and repeat it three times. As I mentioned earlier, vows with yourself are always repeated three times — it’s a rule I learned from one of my spiritual teachers, one of those rules without explanation. And it works. You’ll just have to trust me on this.

Act 6. Soak in the Promise

Congratulations! You just made one of the most important promises to one of the most important people in your life — you! Now it’s time to let this vow soak in. Take a bath, a nap, or a walk, or have an evening out with yourself and wear this self-love promise like a locket around your neck with your beautiful promise inside. Too often we move on from one thing to another without letting what we’ve just done settle or soak in. It is a great act of self-love to give yourself the space to bask in the love you have just promised to yourself.

And then tomorrow...



Daring Act of Love

Make a Morning Love Mantra

Keep the self-love flowing and growing by turning your promise into a Love Mantra, a promise repeated again and again in order to amplify its power and therefore its presence in your life. As you repeat these words of truth about love, you program the love into your mind, heart, body, and spirit. You can keep the words exactly as they stand in your promise, or you can shorten them so that they feel more like a jingle running through your mind, body, and spirit. The secret of using a mantra is the repetition of the same phrase over and over again. Just as doing fifty squats a day would give you strong quadriceps, doing fifty morning Love Mantras will strengthen your relationship with you.



It's best to commit to a specific time of day to repeat the mantra — mornings rock for starting the day supercharged with love. Every day, some time before starting work or after dropping the kids at school, say your mantra out loud fifty times. At first this may feel weird and forced. Keep going anyway. Keep up the mantra until the day you feel the words sink in deep or until a new mantra shows up. You'll be surprised at how Love Mantras just start popping up as if they're excited to help move the love through you.