



LOVE IS IN THE AIR – AND INSIDE

Following the national day of mourning that is Tisha B'av, we have the 15th day of the month, **Tu B'av**, the Jewish day of love, **transitioning from loss to love**. Dating back to the Second Temple period (circa 537 - 516 BCE), this was a day dedicated to matchmaking for unmarried Jews. But the textual source for this day offers us a unique insight into the Jewish idea of love, and particularly **self-love**, with a peculiar comparison to a seemingly unrelated holiday.

There were no better (i.e. happier) days for the people of Israel than the Fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, since on these days the daughters of Israel/Jerusalem go out dressed in white and dance in the vineyards. What were they saying: Young man, consider whom you choose (to be your wife)? - Tractate Ta'anit

Modern sensibilities aside, the text's comparison of Tu B'av, a day of matchmaking and love, to Yom Kippur, a day of atonement, jumps out at the reader, forcing the question: What could these two days possibly have in common?

One answer to that question could be that they don't inherently have anything in common; rather, one can inform the other and elevate our Tu B'av experience. On Yom Kippur, spiritual practitioners are tasked with delving deep into their subconsciouses, taking a hard look at themselves and their lives and finding space to forgive themselves while also asking G-d for forgiveness. **Perhaps, similarly, the day of love Tu B'av, this text is reminding us to look inward and try to find love for ourselves while we also try to find love for others.**

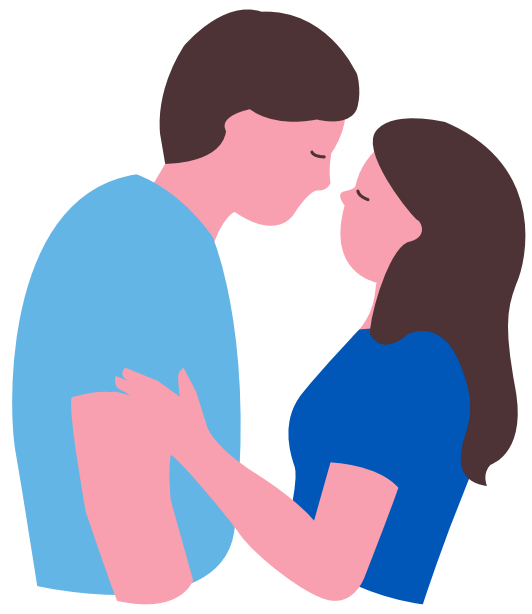




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Any formative conversation about mental health must begin with a foundation of dignity and respect for all – including for ourselves. By seeing ourselves as being created **b'tzelem Elohim (in G-d's image)**(Genesis 1:26), we can counter internal shame and stigma that prevent us from achieving mental wellness and instead lead to mental illness like low self-esteem, depression and anxiety. Judaism has a long tradition of recognizing that people don't require only physical healing. In morning services when we recite the mi sheberach for the sick, we pray for both *refuat hanefesh* and *refuat haguf*, a healing of the spirit (mental, emotional, social and spiritual wholeness) and of the body. It is only by treating both the physical and the mental that we can achieve *refuah shleimah*, healing and wholeness.

On Tu B'av, we have a heightened awareness of love, and the day's connection with Yom Kippur reminds us we need to love ourselves as well – and we are worthy of love. These two middot (or Jewish values) – **B'tzelem Elohim** and **Refuah Shleima** – can guide us as we journey toward self-love to live healthier, more fulfilling lives.





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Activity – Show Yourself Some Love

Of course, self-love can be challenging, and it isn't always accessible. Fortunately, a number of wonderful coping skills and self-care practices can help you find it.

Three Coping Skills to Develop Self-Love

Care as much about yourself as you do for others.

It may feel selfish, but it isn't. Caring about yourself just as much as you care for others is fair and necessary for living a mentally healthy life. Treat yourself the way you would treat anyone else – with gentleness, concern and care.



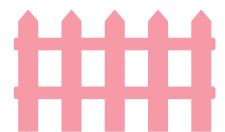
Do what you need to do to be you.

Figure out what makes you happy and DO IT. Maybe you need a short walk every morning or some time after work to recharge? Whatever it is, giving yourself space to heal and love yourself will help you feel better and better equipped to help others.



Maintain your boundaries.

We all have lines we don't want people crossing, and it is important to voice those things. Your comfort is important, and it is crucial to your self-esteem to assert those boundaries.



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In the hearts below, express your self-love, and name three things you love about yourself.

