

Your Relationship With You

Your relationship with yourself lies at the heart of all other relationships; it is the bedrock upon which all other relationships rest.

Mariah Fenton Gladis

The Inspirational Living Series

Books by

Mariah Fenton Gladis

Tales of A Wounded Healer

INSPIRATIONAL LIVING SERIES:

Bitterness Is Not An Option

Creating Moments That Matter

Asking For What You Want

The Art Of Receiving Well

Your Relationship With You

Magic Words To Fulfilling Relationships

The Experience of Forgiveness

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About The Author



In 1981, Mariah Fenton Gladis was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), more commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Three prominent neurologists gave her a 10% chance of surviving more than 2 years.

Yet, three months after the diagnosis, Mariah married and proceeded to have two children. Today, she continues to be a loving wife, a doting mother, an author, a renowned psychotherapist and motivational speaker. Mariah’s courage to continually go forward with grace and determination—and without bitterness—demonstrates the amazing survival capacity of the human spirit.

Mariah continues to conduct workshops across the globe, addressing a wide range of human challenges: from early life emotional trauma to debilitating grief and loss, from life threatening illnesses to people seeking more meaning and joy in their lives.

In Mariah’s words:

“People often ask me how I do it, listening to people’s problems all day long. I tell them that I don’t hear problems. I hear people wanting to change, wanting to be better human beings, wanting to create happier families. From every continent and all walks of life I hear people wanting to love and be loved more effectively. I hear people wanting to remove barriers in their lives and provide a healthier environment for their loved ones. This is a privileged position that I have, sharing so many compelling and heartwarming moments of laughter and tears with people working toward healing.”

Your Relationship With You

My husband's aunt Eleanor likes to say, "I don't mind anyone talking to themselves. It's when they talk back that gets me." We all have visions of people talking to themselves. Those crazy loonies. Those sad souls at subway stops or old aunt Harriet. The truth is, we talk to ourselves all the time. And it's not that we do it that is the problem. It's *how* we do it that's the problem. Positive self-talk can heal. Negative self-talk can cripple.

It's not widely understood that each of us is "dyadic" in our nature, that is, we both experience and respond to our experiences and thoughts. We actually are in a relationship with ourselves. For instance, when you think, you are essentially talking to yourself. Then you respond via your body. It's a twofold process. When you have critical thoughts about yourself, you almost always respond with bodily tension and hurt feelings, thus compounding the negative impact. If you cry and you have the thought that crying is wrong or weak, or you respond with indifference instead of empathy and love for yourself, then you, in fact, increase the original sorrow. When you say positive things to yourself, you feel alive and joyous. You sparkle and smile.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of developing a positive relationship with yourself. I spend a lot of time with all of my clients, training them how to be in a loving, responsive, active relationship with themselves and how to develop a positive internal dialogue. I wait until I'm sure they have integrated enough internal support before I embark on any deep work with them. Without this core strength, they might cry or rage on the surface and never resolve issues or heal—rendering the work ineffective.

This concept is essential. It is important for anyone who is facing deep pain to learn how to respond immediately to him or herself with understanding, compassion and an embrace. I frequently tell my clients, “When you cry, cry into your own embrace.” This may take the form of a physical embrace, where you put your arms around yourself in the same spirit as you would comfort a loved one. It’s also ideal if there is a person or people who provide a receptive, emotionally generous environment.

Your relationship with yourself lies at the heart of all other relationships and provides the foundation upon which a good partnership rests. It is unfair and impossible to ask a partner to love you better or more than you love yourself. You will sabotage that love. You will not allow it in at a very deep level.

By loving yourself, I don’t mean narcissism or selfishness or self-inflated views of yourself. I mean that you are in contact with yourself. You are in your body, in your mind with your heart and soul. You are in total contact with and appreciate the four aspects of yourself: the physical, the emotional, the spiritual and the intellectual.

It’s also important for you to have unconditional love for yourself and a steady flow of compassion not only for all your hurts and pains but also for any illnesses, weaknesses, flaws and insecurities. And it’s critical that you have forgiveness for yourself. That doesn’t mean in any way lowering your standards of morality or ethics. It means you are human. When you fall down, you need to be the first one there to pick yourself up. Loving yourself means having an active internal dialogue, talking to yourself in very loving ways. You are, in fact, talking to yourself morning, noon and night via thinking. If you’re having a monologue as if you were talking to no one, you’ll end up feeling lonely. You’ll have loneliness within rather than being in relationship with

yourself.

We are relational beings. We exist and behave in relationship to something or someone. This phenomenon of relating, so beautifully described by the philosopher Martin Buber, requires both an I and a Thou. So I, Mariah, see and value you, Mariah. I don't mean that there is more than one of me. What I mean is that I am both the seer and the object of my seeing. I'm only one. I both touch myself lovingly and am touched by myself. So, the more you can develop this close, active relationship with yourself, the healthier and happier you will become.

That means talking to yourself purposefully. Turn a lot of your thinking into personal conversation with yourself. There is someone home. Live as if you're at home with yourself. Stand by yourself. Don't be alone. Instead, be with yourself and develop the internal relationship that you want externally, because usually what you have is a match. What's inside is outside. You attract what you are. And, unfortunately, you cannot, over time, allow in any more love than you are already giving to yourself.

So, develop an inner dialogue that is very rich. Every night, I have this moment with myself. In my bathroom, I surrounded the tub with floor to ceiling mirrors, so that I and Thou can chat. I give myself appreciation for what I have done that day. How I have lived another day well. Or, maybe I have to forgive myself when I am less than kind or patient, or when I'm tough or critical or all those human things that we all can be.

For a moment, look at your hands. Look at each finger, the front, and the back. Consider for a moment that you *are* your hands, instead of your *having* hands. They are not separate from you. You *are* your hands. Think back, over time, of all the things your hands have done for you. Thank your hands.

What are the most valuable things your hands do for you? Thank them. Remember that you were born into this life with these same hands.

Now imagine you're looking in a mirror at your own face. Look into your own eyes. See the emotion in your eyes. Say your own name out loud. Keep saying it. For example, "Mariah, I am with you now and always. I will never abandon you. And if it takes our whole lifetime, I will learn to love you well. You have my deep commitment."

Now in this moment, ask yourself, using your own name, what do you feel now? And wait for an answer. When you have your answer, ask what do you need about that from me right now. And now, provide what you need. Give it to yourself. And now, receive what you have given. Inhale. Receive. And thank yourself.

Let's review these four steps. Look in a mirror and use your own first name.

1. Ask yourself, "(Your Name), what do you feel now?"
(Wait for an answer)
2. Ask yourself, "(Your Name), what do you want or need from me about that feeling now?" (Wait for an answer)
3. Creatively provide
4. Receive and appreciate what you have provided

Eventually, you will want to develop the ability to imagine your own face as clearly as if you were looking in a mirror. Can you imagine a white and yellow daisy? Now, imagine your own face. Is it more difficult? Usually it's nearly impossible before you've done a lot of this work. You don't know your own face instantly. You want to be able to visualize yourself as clearly as if you were in a mirror, and that will take some time.

Is speaking to yourself with kindness a new experience? If so, that's the intimacy missing. And that's exciting, because as you do this, your life is going to absolutely change.

And here's the wonderful thing. With a positive inner dialogue, you'll come to your other relationships already loved. You'll arrive full, and others will find you easy to love. You're not coming "on empty." That's really, really important. Do not expect a partner to give you any more than you're giving yourself. Always arrive already loved.

So the next time you find yourself talking to yourself about yourself, pay attention to what you say. If it's negative and demeaning, then change it in mid-sentence and watch how much better you feel. If it's positive and supportive, then, don't worry about what Eleanor or anyone else thinks, keep on talking to yourself.

—Excerpts from Mariah's book *Tales of a Wounded Healer*

BIOGRAPHY: Mariah Fenton Gladis, MSS, LCSW, BCD

Founder and Clinical Director of the Pennsylvania Gestalt Center for Psychotherapy and Training since 1976, Mariah has been a faculty workshop leader at *Esalen Institute* since 1987. She received a Social Worker of the Year award from *NASW*, a Living Legacy Award from the *Women's International Center*, and is one of "Pennsylvania's Best 50 Women in Business."

Mariah is on the Board of Advisors of *Camp Dreamcatcher* – a camp for children affected/infected with HIV/AIDS, faculty and trainer for *Center for a Healthy World*, a volunteer-driven psychotherapy cooperative, and belongs to the *National Association of Social Workers*, where she is a Board Certified Diplomat. Mariah is the author of *Tales of*

a Wounded Healer, an accessible description of her psychotherapy practice.