

Valuing Yourself Means Valuing Your Experience, Not Self-Regard

What does self-valuing means and how does it differ from thinking highly of yourself. How to apply self-valuing in everyday situations.

In the previous part, [Comparison Games article](#), we talked about the problem with comparative self-worth. The idea of valuing yourself was introduced. But what is it, actually?

Before moving on, let's imagine 3 situations. Try to think about what a person who values themselves would do in each of them:

Scenario 1: The Pineapple Juice You're at a bar. You look at the top shelf — there are large bottles of juice there, including pineapple juice. You ask the bartender how much a glass costs. The bartender tells you he's not serving this juice by the glass — although he's pouring it into a glass right in front of you. What do you do?

Scenario 2: The Summit You're lying on a sofa somewhere in a bar, chilling. There are a few businessmen next to you in suits. You're fine with it as this is a shared space and everyone is doing their own thing. Then a whole group arrives — 30 more people — and the meeting turns into what looks like some important summit. The place is now at capacity. What do you do?

Scenario 3: The Café Chat You're with a friend. You are chatting somewhere over a coffee. Suddenly a Spanish-speaking person appears, asks a few questions, you answer. You are proud of how you speak Spanish, and of all the effort you put into learning it. Then your friend says they thought you spoke Spanish better, and that your other friend is way more fluent. You do not agree. What do you do?

It might seem that in the above situations, the “valuing-yourself” response means standing your ground, getting what you deserve, proving your point.

Why?

Most people think that valuing yourself means:

- Thinking highly of yourself

- Feeling good about who you are
- Treating self-esteem as how highly you regard yourself

And if that is true, then what follows is this:

- Protecting your rights
- Standing your ground
- Not “letting people” treat you poorly
- Knowing what you deserve and getting it

Following the logic, the chain would look like this:

If I think highly of myself → I have standards about how I should be treated → how I am treated is not my decision, it is information I get from “outside”, from reality → when reality doesn’t meet those standards, my self-image is threatened → so I must fight to get what I “deserve” → because not fighting means my positive self-image was wrong.

The question: Why is that logic even there?

Part 1: The Traps

Trap 1: Positive Statements About Yourself

What does “thinking highly of oneself” even mean? It means knowing one’s strengths, or, in other words, making positive statements about oneself (out loud or not).

- “I love myself for being funny / cool / understanding”
- “I love my beautiful hair / my kindness / my strength”
- “I like how intelligent / easy-going / determined I am”

Sounds good? It does until it becomes clear that mistaking valuing yourself for thinking highly of yourself is a very specific trap:

■ A positive statement about oneself creates a vulnerability that can be contested.

What does it mean? That every single one of those statements creates something to defend. “I’m funny” is an assertion about reality. It has truth conditions. Someone can disagree. Evidence can contradict it. Your own experience tomorrow can undermine it. It doesn’t matter how you phrase it — the moment you’ve made a claim about yourself and tied your self-worth to it, you’ve built

on something that reality can pull out from under you, whether by taking it away or by someone else disagreeing.

Your humor, your looks, your intelligence, your kindness — none of these are fixed. They fluctuate. They depend on context. Other people get a vote on whether they're even real.

Every item on the list is a piece of evidence that can be challenged, and now your self-worth has the structure of an argument that needs to hold up.

And if what you like about yourself is relational, this becomes a double trap. If what you like about yourself is how respected or trusted you are, that belongs fully to other people.

Trap 2: The Evaluation Problem

Valuing and regard are not the same thing. High self-regard or low self-regard — both are still based on evaluation. And no evaluation is possible without comparison.

It might seem that “I am a kind person” does not need any other people in the picture. But you can't form any relevant opinion about yourself without a reference point. You being kind means nothing if everyone is equally kind. So when a person likes themselves for being pretty, or strong, it means that they looked around, noticed that other people are, or can be, less pretty and less strong, and concluded that having more of that feature is likeable.

Which makes it nothing less than our old favorite comparison games.

Having this kind of opinion about yourself automatically puts you in the comparison game.

Every “I'm valuable” has hidden questions behind it: Compared to what? Measured against what standard? Proven by what evidence?

“I'm not valuable” has exactly the same structure, just an inverted conclusion.

Both require the person to see themselves, even without knowing, **as an object being measured**. Which means always being vulnerable to new data that could shift the assessment.

So even if you could somehow keep defending the claim, it still requires the people around you to have less than you.

Trap 3: “I Deserve X”

“I value myself, so I deserve the best juice”. “I respect myself, so I will not let anyone move me”. “I know what I know, so I will say it out loud” — all of those sound impressive, and like the right thing to do, don’t they?

The problem is that deserving things does not equal getting things. I can deserve respect and get none. I can deserve kindness, but the person who was supposed to give me that kindness does not need to agree. Their kindness is theirs to give or refuse.

At the end of the day, the bartender can say “Yeah, we’ve got that juice. But you’re not getting it. Fuck off.”

Then what? You can cry, you can fight, you can complain. And the bartender can completely ignore all of that. Or call security to get you thrown out. Either the “deserving” self-concept gets ruined, or the whole day does.

And that is the trap with “deserving things”:

Every “I deserve” is an unwritten contract that the other party never signed.

You can decide you deserve everything there is, but nobody else agreed to those terms. Now your internal state is controlled by someone else. And getting what you deserve rarely depends on you alone. You need the bartender, the boss, or the universe to honor a contract they don’t know exists.

That is not the only problem. You get another thing in your collection to defend, and you have to defend it hard. You have a new thing to think about. What do you do and how do you behave so others can see that you value yourself? That you are not a pushover? That you have self-respect?

Whatever you do, the final evaluation belongs to others, not you. The bartender can think you are a pushover no matter what you did. And then if the refusal repeats in different situations, let’s say 3 times in a row, then how can you even keep claiming that you deserve things if no one agrees?

Now you have to keep defending the claim, making sure that the people around you have less than you and that the same people confirm you deserve what you believe you do. That is how you end up with your self-worth entirely at the mercy of other people.

The only thing you have control of is valuing your time, your energy, and your experience.

Part 2: What Valuing Is

Valuing yourself is not what you think about yourself. It is how you behave toward yourself.

More concretely, it **is caring about your own experience**. Caring about your own experience means protecting your finite resources.

Actually valuing yourself means:

- Valuing your time (not wasting it on low-stakes fights)
- Valuing your energy (not burning it on proving points)
- Valuing your peace of mind (not creating internal friction)

Valuing yourself = treating your time, energy, and peace of mind as precious and finite, and making decisions that preserve them. It is wanting the best possible experience for oneself, taking into account the circumstances.

The Dog Analogy — Core Principle

People have a hard time imagining what it would mean to value themselves. But they already have a perfect example of what it looks like to value something.

Valuing your dog: when someone values their dog (or a cat, or a parrot) they want the dog to have the best experience possible. They are not sitting there thinking “I regard this dog highly.” They just want good things for the dog and for it to be happy.

You CAN sit down and write 75 things you love about your dog. But it’s not the central thing in your relationship to the dog. If you value your dog, you want life to be the best it can be. You want it to have fun, to avoid fights with other dogs, to not be exposed to fireworks and other scary things, and to not be put through discomfort when it can be avoided. And this is exactly what valuing is.

Valuing yourself = wanting YOUR experience to be as good as possible.

It’s not “I value myself, SO I deserve nice things.” It’s “I value myself, SO I want to have a good day.”

Dog Example 1: The Pupcup

You are taking your dog to a dog café. The dog normally gets a specific pupcup. There is no pupcup today, just snacks. Will you spend 15 minutes fighting over the pupcup “to protect your dog’s dignity”

while your dog gets stressed? The dog doesn't want dignity — the dog wants a treat and to go to the park.

You take what is available, go to the park, and the dog has a good day.

Dog Example 2: The Closed Park

The park is closed. Will you start getting angry at “idiots who close parks on Sundays” while your dog waits? Your dog would be sitting there uncomfortable and stressed about you being stressed. Is that choosing your dog's comfort? Obviously not.

You find another place for the dog to run. The dog still has a good day.

Dog Example 3: The Best Breed

You are sitting in a café with your dog. A couple at the table next to yours glances at your dog and starts talking about how large dogs are the most beautiful ones. Yours is a chihuahua. Will you spend a sleepless night thinking about how to fix your dog's look? No, you just tell your dog he is the prettiest and goodest boy in the universe, and forget it by the evening.

Your dog is the prettiest in the whole wide universe just because he exists.

X/

Part 3: Back to the Three Scenarios

The Summit — Self-Valuing Choice

Some people would say: “I was here first. I have the right to my comfort. I'm staying. I'm valuing myself.”

But is that really valuing yourself? Is anyone really comfortable sitting there, visibly in the way, and insisting “I was here first”? If you're tense, if you're in the way, you can't relax. This is not valuing your own experience, this is proving a point.

Actual self-valuing: If you value your comfort, you probably move to the bar, where you'll actually be comfortable. You don't need to think about whether the guy in the suit thinks you're a pushover. That's completely irrelevant. A relevant question is: taking into account the situation, other people's rights and "my values", what is the best choice I can make?

The value question is important exactly because valuing yourself DOES NOT mean letting go every time. Sometimes, valuing your experience means standing for your right to do something. More often, though, it means not choosing a fight, or discomfort, just to prove a point.

The Pineapple Juice — Self-Valuing Choice

Some people would think that having boundaries and self-respect means you should say: "But you're pouring it! Why can't I get some?"

And again, sometimes self-valuing choice means standing for yourself. But more often than not it means letting go, for the sake of the quality of your own experience.

But why not fight? Because you are in someone else's space, their bar. The bartender represents that bar. He's telling you this product isn't available in that format. Even if it were personal — even if he just didn't want to give it to YOU specifically — he has the right to say no. What difference does it make if it's personal?

Other people have the right to make their own choices, even if those choices are about you.

Will arguing get you the juice? Maybe. Small chance. The more likely result is conflict, wasted time, friction, bad energy. Is this worth your time and energy?

The Café Chat — Self-Valuing Choice

Some people would think that you should say something to your friend. Either tell them you do not agree about your level, or at least point out how much effort you have put into learning. That one should stand behind what they know about themselves.

But what is the point? Does anyone else's opinion change what you know about your effort? Does their opinion change how the conversation goes for you? Does the fact that your friend is more fluent, in their opinion, change anything about your level?

And that still has not touched on your energy, and your comfort. Will your afternoon, and your coffee break, get better for you if you start the discussion? Will your energy be well spent on comparing yourself to other people to establish who stands where, exactly?

Every person has the right to their opinions, about themselves, and others, including you. But this DOES NOT mean that everyone should just sit quietly absorbing lies, hurtful things, or accusations. Sometimes valuing your experience means nothing less than doing the most uncomfortable-looking thing in the moment — speaking your truth. Because your experience does not get better with swallowed words replaying in your head for the rest of the week. Walking away from a fight protects your afternoon. But carrying something unsaid can ruin your month.

So when to speak and when to let go? The same question as always applies: what will make your experience better — not just in this second, but also tomorrow, and next week?



Q&A

Q1. What about statements about myself that do not compare to anyone? Like: “I always finish what I start” or “I help people whenever I can”. Those are fine to have about yourself, right?

Obviously all those statements are fine and there is nothing problematic about them. Unless they become the basis of your self-worth. Because you do not just always finish things, you are a person who always finishes things. It becomes your identity. It makes you proud of yourself. But then one day you start getting migraines daily. Or your relative gets sick. Or you get burned out. And then you barely even start anything, let alone finish. How do you feel about yourself now, if you suddenly became a person who does not finish anything at all? Statements about yourself are not a problem by themselves, but they create vulnerability: if something changes, and you lose the thing, your self-worth might fall apart.

Q2. So is fighting for your “juice” standing for your rights or making a fuss about nothing and killing your experience?

There is no one universal answer. No one else can say if eating a burger vs hummus will make your experience better. In the same way, no one can say if fighting for your rights will make your experience better than giving up and walking away would.

But you can tell for yourself — the same way you just know whether you’re hungry, without needing anyone else to confirm it. The difference comes down to one question: Are you expressing yourself (your need, your value, your truth) for yourself? Or are you doing it to prove a point, to yourself or others? If you’d say the thing about the juice even knowing you won’t get it, and regardless of who thinks what, just because expressing it makes your experience better, that’s the first option. If you

need the bartender to actually hand over the juice, or other people to agree, or you to look like a non-pushover for it to feel worthwhile, that's the second, and you're back in the trap.

Q3. How can it be about the quality of my experience if you say sometimes someone can do the most uncomfortable thing possible?

Because the quality of the experience rarely stops right there in the moment — it continues. Most people know what it means to have a whole awful day, and an awful night, because of something that happened in the morning. A fight about juice, or your Spanish level, rarely stops at the event itself. And the same goes for not speaking up. Sometimes not saying what we wanted to say haunts us for weeks. Valuing your own experience means doing the thing that will give you the best possible experience, given the circumstances, in the long run, not only in this moment.

Q4. How to know if the moving is for your comfort, or is it really for other people's comfort and ignoring your own?

This is simple. Are you uncomfortable now, for whatever reason (including their discomfort)? Will you be more comfortable if you move? Then do it. Will you be less comfortable, for whatever reason (including not standing your ground)? Then do not move.

Q5. How to avoid internal fights? I mean: is it being chill, or being a pushover? Should I move, or should I stay?

The internal fight — “am I a pushover, am I too kind, should I stand my ground, who goes first” — burns massive energy and creates constant self-worth instability because every interaction becomes a test.

The solution is to set your own rules beforehand. The rule does not need to be followed no matter what, but just needs to be applicable in most situations without having to think about “who is the stronger person here.” An example is my personal rule: “always say hi first.”

Advantages of having a rule like that:

1. Eliminates the decision point (no more weighing case-by-case)
2. Makes it about your choice, not someone's response (I decided this rule for me, independently)
3. Takes self-worth out of the equation (their response doesn't validate or invalidate my choice)
4. Flips the interpretation (they don't respond → something's up with them, not a referendum on me)

Q6. Ok, and what to do if...

- I am really in the right
- The other person really wronged me

- I am persuaded I am right...

The answer is simple: whatever will make your experience the best. Want to fight? Go for it. Want to say your version? Go for it. Want to stand for yourself? Do it. This is NOT, in any case, an article saying not to fight for your rights, not to stand up for yourself, not to speak your truth. The point of this article is to move from reading the environment, rules and conditions for “how to react well” to asking yourself: is this worth my precious time and energy? Some fights are.

___X/Ø,___