

February 26th through March 4th represents National Eating Disorder Awareness week. During this week, the general public will likely see articles, tweets and maybe some Facebook posts that will cause them to think for a bit about those suffering from an eating disorder. For those who do suffer however, they'd give anything *not* to think about their eating disorder for a week. Not to think about calories, food or exercise. Because for those suffering from an eating disorder, this is not just a week but this is all consuming. It's what keeps you up at night, regretting what you ate that day or how you can make tomorrow "better." It's what drives wedges between family members and ruins the notion of a happy family meal. Social lives will be impaired as impromptu happy hours and dinners out become the causes of stress, not stress-relievers. Your relationship with exercise? It's not a means of keeping healthy but rather, simply a method of burning calories. Eating disorders affect every aspect of an individual's life thus deeming it impossible not to constantly think about.

It is timely that NEDA week falls in the month of February, one usually associated with love. You express love for your significant other, friends and family during Valentine's Day but have you taken time to love yourself? While this is easier said than done, loving yourself is incredibly important. Practicing self love is not exclusive to physical acts such as taking time to read a book or indulging in a warm bath and facemask but also takes on a very emotional and psychological component. Self love means acceptance. Forgiveness. Awareness to know when you're being too harsh on yourself. We are usually ourselves worst critics. Use this week to cut yourself some slack. Write down what you love about yourself and use this as something to reflect back upon when self-doubt starts to creep in. As one of the most well known childhood authors Dr. Seuss wrote, "Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive that is you're than you." At the end of the day, YOU are all you have. YOU are who you're going to be spending the rest of your life with. YOU are whose opinion matters. That's what Dr. Seuss was trying to tell us as children yet as we grow up, this message often gets lost. We get so wrapped up into impressing our friends, significant others, co-workers, your mom's random friends on social media that we forget what came so organically as children. Just be yourself. You ran on that playground because you had a burst of energy and you wanted to feel the wind in your hair as you gleefully moved your body. You wanted to rock pink cowboy boots with jean leggings and an oversized floral shirt and didn't think twice about the looks you'd receive at the grocery store. That cake at the birthday party you went to? You didn't think twice about calories or fat or how many grams of sugar it had. You were just being you!

This year during NEDA week, take some time to practice self love. Try to channel that innocence and freedom associated with childhood and just be *yourself* because at the end of the day, all you have is one self.