



# mindset

BY KAREN STEWART, MA

## ages and stages

**A**fter more than 30 years of being a psychotherapist and a lifelong spiritual seeker, I am led to share some things I have come to believe are true.

*Parents are supposed to love and take care of their children. They should never hit their children, ask them to do anything that is wrong or hurtful, or to keep secrets that feel bad. All parents are doing the best they can, but some parents are immature, addicted to substances or mentally ill and do not know how to love and care for their children properly. If your parents are or were alcoholic or abusive or neglectful you do not bear the shame for their behavior. You have been a victim and you need to find people you can trust and who can help you heal from the traumas you experienced.*

**The only correct response when you say “No” is some variation of “I understand and respect your decision.” Any other response is emotional manipulation designed to get you to do something that will make the other person happy at the expense of what you have decided is right for you at the time.**

*Popularity can seem very important and compelling, but should never be at the expense of betraying your values.*

**The fashion and cosmetics industries are based on making girls and women feel badly about themselves and in need of products and services to make them more beautiful, acceptable and lovable. Be very careful where you invest your time and money. Never fall prey to the feeling that your value is based on your looks, clothes, or social status.**

*Do not sit around waiting “to be chosen.” Think about what you want in a partner or friend. How do you want to be treated? What are your values? Expect kindness and respect as a bare minimum in a relationship. If you are afraid to assert your desires and stand up for yourself, get help and coaching from a trusted friend or professional.*

**Do not be afraid of being alone. Learn to enjoy time by yourself. Loving and valuing yourself first is the most necessary ingredient to making a wise choice of a partner or friend.**

*Thinking about worries in the middle of the night is never helpful. Everything seems worse and it is impossible to see things clearly. Meditating or engaging in another spiritual practice or distracting yourself by reading something that is calming and soothing is much better.*

**You can call on others in times of distress. Reaching out and sharing burdens, hurts, fears and frustrations makes them lighter. Being there for others when they need someone enriches your life as well.**

*Pay attention to how you feel when you are around your friends. A real friend may tell you hard truths that you may not want to hear, but when you are around that person you feel good about yourself. Be a good friend. The Golden Rule really is the way to go: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” We feel happiest when we are helping others.*

**When you run into someone who drives you crazy it is probably because of something inside of you that you need to examine. Use them as motivation to understand deeper truths about yourself. Don’t be afraid to face difficult feelings but don’t dwell on them either. Feel the feelings and then let them go as you are able.**

*You can learn to take good care of yourself: eat good food when you are hungry, get enough rest and exercise, take time to play, build a supportive community of friends.*

**You are a beloved child of the universe; and while bad things may happen to you there is that within that will always remain unscathed, pure, innocent, and loving. You have only to look within to find it.**

*Finally, you are more than your thoughts, feelings or bodily sensations. At any time, but especially when you are distressed, you can ask “What am I experiencing right now?” You can describe your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations and accept them as they are. Then you can go inside and ask, “Who is experiencing this?” and go beyond them to that calm still place that is always present. ❧❧*

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