

**Value of Words and Self-love: An Analysis of Najwa Zebian's Interview**

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**Abstract**

*This study probes into the realization and discovery of self-love and acknowledgment. The paradigm used for data collection is qualitative in nature and the data is analyzed through textual analysis and the theme of the study is analyzed through thematic analysis. Researchers have also used primary and secondary resources for data collection. It is concluded through the study that people can reach the state of self-love and embrace themselves for who they really are, only if they struggle to set boundaries, overcome their childhood fears, and set themselves free from external opinions and expectations. It can also be concluded that self-realization is achieved only when people build a home inside themselves, take the risk of a change within, and heal themselves completely from the inside. This study reflects upon the different struggles and stages that an individual goes through after losing themselves and their identity. It also reflects upon the internal fears, traumas, insecurities, loss, love deprivation, and emptiness that reside within an individual for most of their lives and the myth of unfolding the truth which intimately leads towards self-love.*

**Keywords:** Self-Love, Self-Acceptance, Self-Acknowledgement, Self-Worth, Self-Esteem and Self-Fulfillment.

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**1. Introduction**

Communicating personal experiences and conveying life messages to others have a huge impact on people and society. Words have always been useful and therapeutic for healing processes. The choice of words and effective communication can bring drastic changes in the lives of others. The impact of words by using any medium-poetry, novel, speech, or oral communication has mostly helped people in healing and relating to the stories and life experiences of others. It is words that bring people together. It is through language that people share their struggles, experiences, past,

present, and future, or embrace their traumatic situations to describe the universal as well as personal realities to let people understand who is who and what is what. People use their linguistic power to express their feelings and share their knowledge of the world in an influential manner. However, a small, good change in life can surely circulate bigger positivity throughout life.

The words and wisdom of Najwa Zebian, her poetry, and her interviews have reflected her experiences and carry a huge influence on readers' minds. Everyone can relate to every single word that she utters. Poetry is used as a medium to convey her life experiences effectively. The use of wordplay in her poetry is of great value. Anyone can relate to the experiences shared by the poet.

Words can invoke and evoke emotions through poetic language, rhetorical statements, persuasive expressions, or empathetic words that have a profound effect on people's actions, belief systems, and attitudes toward life. Effective communication through words can help in understanding conflictive situations and help resolve the contradictions among people's ideas and generate different viewpoints to motivate and encourage people in appropriately dealing with life experiences. According to Pennebaker (1993), individuals use expressive language in writing about personal traumas wherein, their physical as well as mental health is found to be of significant improvement through expressive therapeutic writing (Pennebaker, 1993). Words can be used as a powerful form of meditation, and prayers, and connect the mind to our insights. These insights help in enlightening others' inner voices and help in healing and comforting their inner disruption through therapeutic words.

### **Embrace Yourself**

New starts in life after relationships end are always difficult to manage but once it gets done, it appears to be a new growth of a new self in a new manner. New blooming buds are always fresh and captivating. The same is the case with humans, their involvement in relationships makes them dependent on their partners. They live a dependent life where they have forgotten about their self-esteem, pride, and worth and constantly try to please people and damage their self-respect in the process. The topic at hand uncovers Najwa Zebian's life experiences after struggling in a toxic relationship to make up her life but in the end, found nothing but only her true self. There is a well-

known saying by Abraham Lincoln that it is difficult to make a man miserable while he feels worthy of himself.

Self-concept is what creates one's understanding of himself based on his personality traits, personal experiences, thoughts, and ideas in shaping himself in various situations. It also makes one aware of past experiences, the consciousness of the present, and insights into the future. Self-concept is created when one can value himself. His role in life is determined by him and not others. He possesses a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and self-acceptance. All these concepts develop after being deceived by someone in a relationship. One gets to know his self-knowledge when he is exposed to a heartbreak or after the end of a relationship. Najwa Zebian (2023) states that "the best day of your life will be the day you truly, in every sense of the word, acknowledge your worth and start living by it" (Zebian, 2023). People with such attitudes develop a profound impression of their lives after recognizing and embracing their values and live their lives aligned with that realization in every way possible.

Dealing with toxic relationships can be a challenging and emotional experience for people. Najwa Zebian in her book *Welcome Home*, explains clearly about her experiences. She has gone through a hard life and miserable experiences in relationships, she has been unwelcoming in others' lives and others have denied giving shelter to her, where she was looking for a home, but she never found any welcoming home inside others but only within herself (Zebian, 2021). Individuals who embrace their distinctiveness and uniqueness, focusing on inner self-improvement and acknowledging their true value beyond what they might perceive they should have, remain authentic to themselves and are advocates of self-love.

### **About the Author**

Najwa Zebian, a Muslim Lebanese Canadian activist, educator, poet, and motivational speaker born on 27 April 1990 in Lebanon, lived in Canada Ontario. She received popularity through poetry on Instagram and got recognition during the Me-Too movement. She also got fame through her TEDx talks and interviews on Canadian news sites such as CBC, and Entertainment Tonight, and through a show, Women of Impact, interviewed by Lisa Bilyeu.

Najwa Zebian says about her debut book *Mind Platter*, “It is a collection of life thoughts as seen through the eye of an educator student and human who spent her early days in silence” (Zebian, 2016). Her journey of healing started from childhood traumas, being abused, and struggling with a lot of emotional breakdowns in relationships but continued rebuilding herself in that long journey by writing on different themes. As a Muslim woman, she heated another public issue of removing her headscarf. Her stance on removing the headscarf was to live her life authentically and to reflect her self-love through actions.

Najwa used her poetry for healing the pain of others through her life experiences from childhood to adulthood and identified the true meaning of home. Zebian (2019) when asked, “How can poetry help you identify home?” In response, she defined the meaning of home. She communicated the meaning of home as a place where we enjoy unlimited freedom, where no restrictions can be inflicted upon us. She always talked about a home inside us, a place where people can shower love unconditionally to themselves, where people soothe their souls and find peace with freedom. He further says, when she began to wonder about certain things, she frequently asks herself “What does home truly mean”, What does it feel like in reality? How does she go about constructing that home for herself? All these questions float in her mind because of poetry (Zebian, 2019). She considers poetry as the purest and rarest form of expressing emotions and thoughts. She believes poetry is the ability to put one’s heartfelt feelings and soul on paper that help people build a home inside their hearts, embrace their originality with compassion, and be true to themselves.

Zebian follows the voice of her heart and encourages others as well through her words to listen to their heart and answer the questions that are repeatedly asked by our inner self. She emphasizes the importance of relationships with us rather than expecting attention from others in every phase of life. After distress in her relationship and her childhood traumas, she realized her place in her heart and wholeheartedly embrace herself for who she was in her past, who she is in her current state, and to seek self-forgiveness and decide her life in the future.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Najwa Zebian is a great and well-known contemporary poet. Her works are basically known for displacement, struggles, and heartbreak. Exploring the themes of love, honesty, friendship, and healing. Many works have been carried out on her poetry, but no work has been carried out on her

interview with Lisa Bilyeu. The researchers have focused on how Zebian describes the value of words and the perception that can truly help us in reaching and being our true selves through the meaning of her poetry and its interpretation.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research focuses on the value and meaning of discovering oneself and unfolding the myth of belonging within oneself. The readers will get the know-how about relying on themselves, building a home where they truly belong, and realizing their self-worth. It will also give the readers an insight into embracing themselves, provoking their thoughts, and healing from their deep-rooted miseries and insecurities.

Najwa Zebian's works can be explored for many themes such as healing, loss, deprivation, happiness, traumas, and so on but due to lack of time, this research certainly focuses on the true value of self-acceptance and the different measures and mindset that can lead an individual in achieving that self-love that they long for.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mark Twain says, "A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval" (Twain).

Nielsen (1973) argues that self-realization according to Plato and Aristotle is knowing and realizing oneself for gaining and flourishing his abilities and potentials to the fullest that culminate in self-growth. A person starts believing in his true essence of life and only achieves a good life and recognizes his true self, dealing with several things that please him. When a person is aware of his potential to love and accept his authentic self, there starts his battle of realization of life from several perspectives and recognizes his abilities and potential in a different way (Nielson, 1973). Firman (1996) argues that self-realization involves identification with the Self and the idea that the Self resides in the higher unconscious only. A person's true self is identified in his unpleasant thoughts, painful feelings, anxiety and conflicts, memories, and urges that reside outside of conscious awareness (Firman, 1996).

Rusu (2019) argues that to understand the complex concept of self-realization and the development of an individual's inner self, there are several factors involved in realizing and recognizing self-

potential, self-knowledge, and experiences that are involved at an emotional level. In the process of development, certain positive processes and active approaches are necessarily involved that leads to self-realization and self-regulation in overcoming difficulties and hardships faced by an individual. If a person does not know himself, he cannot accept himself (Rusu, 2019). This complexity of self-judgment and then answering the questions that are asked by the person from himself to comprehend his authentic self and to accept his self-worth and self-esteem.

Ackerman (2018) states that there is no clear distinction between self-worth and self-value. Both terms can often be used interchangeably. When a person values himself, it means self-worth and when a person has a sense of self-value it means that person is worthy. When we think and believe only about ourselves that is what we call self-esteem. A person should work on himself and his feelings, good or bad whether he is committed to someone or not. Love from others makes a person feel better or worse depending on the relationship, but if he tries working on his true self and loves his 'self' for good, that is what matters. Love and affection from others do not identify the value of a person until and unless he practices self-regulation, self-compassion, and self-acceptance (Ackerman, 2018).

Dr. Annie Tanasugarn (2020) asserts that people with circumscribed self-worth experience toxic relationships and become more vulnerable, adopting self-defeating behaviors that make them feel insecure. People with such attitudes always talk negatively, get involved in the disruption of relationships, compare themselves with others, and avoid intimacies because of the feeling of undeserving of them. And anyone who has experienced an abusive relationship knows well the experience of loss of self-worth, self-doubt, and the feeling of shame that burdened them while carrying on with an unhealthy relationship (Tanasugarn, 2020).

Taylor (2021) states that radical self-love means loving one's own self in a deep and meaningful way. It is not just about being focused on us but recognizing that our wellbeing is linked with a larger system we are part of. Radical self-love goes beyond individualism and applies to both societal and personal levels. By loving and accepting ourselves, we can build a foundation for loving humanity. How we can feel about ourselves also impacts how we relate to others (Taylor, 2021). Loving oneself is giving meaning to life the way he wants it to be. Radical self-love is not

only attached to one's self-love but also the choice of loving others for one's own sake is included in it.

Understanding the law of providing peace to others' lives is also included in this aspect of self-love that is connected to personal as well as societal well-being.

Carson and Langer (2006) explain that one facet of self-love and self-acceptance is the ability and willingness to allow people to see one's true self. Focused people are genuinely authentic in their environment and keenly observe different aspects of different circumstances and intriguing situations, without investing their energies in seeking the attention of others for strengthening and claiming for broken self-esteem to be recovered. On the other hand, people who are in the process of gaining sympathy and impressing people are not genuinely authentic and are in their mindless state. These kinds of people let others mold their ways of life and their behaviors are shaped by the willpower of others. These people do relinquish their authentic selves for the sake of others, and they act and think the way others think they should think or behave. As a result, distancing parting with such ways of their true self and honest feelings for simply enjoying every situation (Carson & Langer, 2006).

According to Leuenberger (2021), the authentic self of an individual is an unchanging and genuine core that one must sustain in life. That is one of the approaches to the authenticity-essentialist approach. Living by a true self is what we mean by authenticity. To see the spectrums of authenticity in one's life, there on one end of the pole a person showers his authentic true being and lives it while on the other end of the essentialist approach that essential or authentic self is being denied and follows the authentic self as freely created. At times when a people's true self is abandoned by societal pressures and others deny the existence of their worthiness, they are ready to sacrifice their connection with society or with those who are not beneficial for such situations for conformity. Then parting their true self or abandoning it leads them to alienation or self-lose. That failure to live one's life according to the demanded will of others directs them to damaged self-esteem. Where in that process one loses his genuine reality of life (Leuenberger, 2021).

Vannini and Franzese (2008) states that authenticity is becoming honest to oneself. It is what builds his personality out of his experiences and practices for relying on himself rather than others. Authenticity can also be termed as self-reflection. It can be an emotional as well as a subjective

experience. These subjective and emotional experiences of authenticity are the result of societal interaction and conventions, norms, and structural positions. To be authentic and honest to oneself is to act and react according to the situation rather than faking and making inauthentic emotions that do not define your original inner self (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). According to Swann (2012), his self-verification theory, there are people whose self-view appears to be negative and such people want others' views to be the same as his. People with such attitudes about self, get involved with self-evaluation that leads to self-verification. For self-verifying judgments, people start involvement in interactions and relationships that help create viewpoints of other partners as a means of self-conformity. In this theory, others' preferences are taken as a lens to self-verification, and see themselves through that lens (Swann, 2012). Self-verification makes sense for corresponding the weaknesses and flaws through the development of a negative self-view. A person who self-verifies himself through others' approval always gives power to others to verify his perceived self the way he wants them to perceive him.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Aim of Study**

This research is about Najwa Zebian's poetry and her interview. The researchers selected Zebian interview with Lisa Bilyeu, published on 27 October 2021. The theme of self-love and self-acceptance is extracted from their interview. This research aims to clarify her idea of self-acceptance so that it might help other people discover themselves and accept themselves for who they really are.

### **Data Collection**

The research paradigm used is Qualitative in nature, as the researchers have collected data through both primary and secondary sources. The interview is used as the primary source for data collection while the websites, journals, and articles, are used as secondary sources for data collection.

The data has been analyzed through the technique of textual analysis. The text is extracted from the interview and analyzed, and interpreted. The interview is about Zebian poetry and personal experiences. Text from the interview supports the idea and theme of self-love and self-acknowledgment. The data has also been collected through thematic analysis, where the themes of



self-love and acknowledgment are mainly explored by the researchers, and the meaning is derived from the text taken in the research.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the data collection is to focus on the different ways and processes that can help an individual get to know themselves in a much better way and explore their self-worth after they have lost themselves or been abandoned by their loved ones.

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The chapter focuses on the analysis of the interview (2021) of Najwa Zebian with Lisa Bilyeu.

#### **Overcome your Childhood**

“Why are you so afraid of feeling pain? What does it tell you about yourself?

Heal that and once you heal that you can heal you, and you are able to be you” (Zebian, 2021).

The lines highlight the insecurities and uncertainties that one feels about himself. Many of us do not get to have a beautiful and happy childhood and we are often frightened and traumatized by our childhood memories. All the fears, the traumas, the insecurities, they all consume us and plant their seed in us from our very childhood. Later, when we grow into adults, those things always remain with us and thus never let us heal and overcome our fears. The poet emphasizes this fact and encourages us to let ourselves feel all our fears and insecurities. The only way to heal ourselves from all the pain is to let the pain in. Try hard to get an understanding of what that specific fear or trauma tells us about ourselves. Once we figure out the core of all our fears that is where the journey to self-acceptance begins. Every one of us needs to permit ourselves to feel the pain.

We must let the pain in, feel it, and overcome it. “Pain demands to be felt” (John Green). The more we suppress our feelings, the more they gaslight us and suffocate us. Our childhood does not define who we are, and we should never be afraid of it or let it get in our way at any point. When we begin to heal ourselves from our roots, that leads us to heal ourselves completely in every possible way.

“I will continue to work hard to hold onto people” (Zebian, 2021).

Zebian reflects upon the point and believes that as children we tend to believe to be accepted and liked by all those around us. Most of the time the biggest misconception that we have is that to make someone stay we have to give them better and harder and thus somehow make them stay with us. This is what drains us the most, and that shakes us to the core because the more we give to others, the closer we move to losing ourselves. Due to these fixed concepts, when we are often rejected, we continue to strike and strive harder to grasp others’ attention. We convince ourselves to give our best, which ultimately follows us in our adulthood, and we never end up being satisfied with ourselves. She says, “As a child, you don’t know how to label something, you internalize it and you keep it there” (Zebian, 2021). When we often feel distressed as children, we do not know of the different ways to come up with solutions. As a result, the unresolved issues are never resolved, and we make them a part of ourselves. We only know what we are being taught and are never able to figure out things on our own.

“You need to allow yourself to feel that pain and empathize with her and speak to her, the way I wish someone spoke to me back then” (Zebian, 2021).

The line elaborates on the acceptance of the past and the connection of adulthood to childhood to embrace our past flaws and traumas and befriend our child-self. The best way to heal ourselves is to let the pain in and allow ourselves to be gentle to ourselves. We need to speak to ourselves with as much kindness and love as we wanted to be spoken to back when we were children. To heal our current self, we need to empathize and soothe the wounded child inside us. According to Zebian, we should treat the younger version of ourselves with such compassion and love as we dreamed to be treated in our childhood. Calm the child version of yourself with delicacy and empathy, with love and pure kindness.

“The price of someone loving you, should not be you not loving yourself” (Zebian, 2021).

This line explains the idea of self-love without considering the love that we receive from others. Self-love is the only key to loving someone else. If we are not able to embrace ourselves for who we are, we may never be capable of giving love to someone else either. If giving love to someone leads us to the path of losing ourselves, then we should stop over there to not lose our originality

in the process. We should always prioritize ourselves and choose what works best for us. We certainly know our worth better than others do.

### **Self-Forgiveness**

“I need to forgive myself for abandoning myself for so long” (Zebian, 2021).

This line highlights the need for self-forgiveness which is often neglected in our worse times. At a young age, we all tend to lose ourselves and lose our way somehow in the darkness. To heal ourselves, we need to forgive ourselves. We need to assure ourselves that we were naïve back then and were not aware of how to look after ourselves. The more we grow, the more we begin to realize the difference between wrong and right for ourselves. Once we are aware of the reality, we realize the need to soothe ourselves. We should be our helper and help ourselves to reach our desired place, where we want to be. We should pay more attention to ourselves, help ourselves, and guide ourselves the way we wanted in our childhood. Self-forgiveness is so important as it allows us to be a better version of ourselves. Whenever we forgive ourselves, we get in control of our lives. It is okay to accept the fact that everyone makes mistakes and that is what makes us human. Forgiving ourselves is a step towards loving ourselves. It is like we are embracing each other. Like we are allowing ourselves to grow.

“To Be compassionate with myself and show myself that empathy” (Zebian, 2021).

According to Zebian, the major key to self-acceptance is to love ourselves and prioritize us for who we are. We should stand in front of the mirror and should start self-talk the way we want to be talked to. We should love ourselves and be compassionate with ourselves to heal ourselves. We should empathize with our feelings and pain. It is only we who have got our back and at the end of the day, it is only we with ourselves. She emphasizes self-forgiveness and conveys her message of self-forgiveness and self-love.

### **Answer Your Call**

“Why don’t you answer your own call? Why are you waiting for a call or a text to tell you you’re worthy? You feel so miserable and empty and depleted and so weak because someone chooses not to call you” (Zebian, 2021).

The biggest reason for most of our suffering is the blind expectation that we have from the people around us. Najwa elaborated on the miseries that people get from high expectations from others. If people want to work on themselves, they must stop expecting too much from others. To reflect upon the notion, we come to know how much time we waste daily by sitting around people and waiting for simple text messages that we never receive or a simple phone call. If we believe we are worth loving by the person we desperately want to be with, then why do we not believe in the fact that we are worth loving by ourselves as well? Why do we not fulfill the expectations that we have from other people by ourselves? “Answer your own call for love” (Zebian, 2021). She mentions the self-worth someone has for himself. If we know we are worth loving, then we should love ourselves first. We should acknowledge this fact deep in our bones that we are our own priority, and we need only ourselves. People should let themselves know that they are worthy and deserving of all their love. We tend to get into a bad mood when the expected person does not care to remember us. People should do what it takes to make themselves happy rather than wait for someone to come around and do it for them. “When you believe you deserve full whole, clear, open, love that's without condition, not depending on the person's mood” (Zebian, 2021). It is we who tend to hurt ourselves most of the time due to our inability to give ourselves what we want, instead, we expect and always have someone to blame at the end of the day. When we know that we deserve better, then we should go for the better because no one can love us better than ourselves.

### **Set Boundaries**

“Boundaries stem from self-worth. I'm drawing this boundary because what I have inside is so valuable. You must allow yourself to open to that” (Zebian, 2021).

The idea that the line communicates is to limit our social circle and give time to our own worthy selves. It is about not giving permission to toxicity and negativity around us, instead, opening our hearts and soul up for our authentic selves to brighten up the valuable person inside us. Most of the time, the reason we are left empty from the inside is that we do not set boundaries. We let everyone in, every way we want and then it is we who end up suffering the most. We need to be careful of ourselves and need to be aware of whom to let in, when, and why. The moment we start setting boundaries, we build a wall around ourselves, our choices and peace are secure within those premises and thus we can save ourselves from hurting and backlash. We only need to let those in,

who can reach out to us, who value us, and who accept us for who we are. Setting boundaries does not mean that we are completely cutting ourselves off from the rest of the world. “Boundaries aren't about being in protection mode” (Zebian, 2021). It is more about protecting what is inside of us, and what is of value to us. We must allow ourselves to open to ourselves and be careful with people whom we allow because we are valuable, and we need to draw a line. We need to reserve our own safe space for ourselves. It reflects upon self-worth knowing our value and worth.

### **Unwanted Labels**

“Do I agree with this? Do I at my core without everything I've been taught is the right way to live? If not, then cross it out” (Zebian, 2021).

According to Zebian, ones opinion of ourselves is usually based on the external people around them. From childhood, we are taught that if we do this or that only then will we be called a good person. It is from this moment that we certainly tend to shape ourselves and our beliefs based on the expectations and opinions of the people around us. We are given certain labels and names and unconsciously we start seeing ourselves through those name tags. We certainly never get to discover who we really are, or who we really want to be but instead, we are always looking for approval and acceptance from other people. This is the way we are believed to live our life and spend our lives, thus, never allowing us to be who we are or want to be. Due to this reason, when we grow into adults, we never seem to be satisfied with our lives. We are always lacking something somewhere. When we are on our journey toward self-realization, we tend to question each and everything that we do. Before doing anything, we need to make sure it is we who want to do it. If we feel like doing a certain thing does not make us feel like ourselves, then we should stop doing it. “Is this really what you want and why” (Zebian, 2021). Zebian emphasizes asking ourselves questions repeatedly unless we find an answer. If it is not something we want to do, we need to allow ourselves to walk away.

### **Look into Yourself**

“You must understand, why you are the way that you are. Why do you behave the way that you do? Why do you connect with people the way you do?” (Zebian, 2021).

The line signifies the point of self-knowledge and self-understanding. To get to know ourselves better we need to get an insight into ourselves. We need to open the window that leads us to our soul and an insight into ourselves. Certain times we seem to behave in a certain way with certain people, or we connect with different people differently. But what leads us to act differently? We need to understand these things and thus understand the relations that we establish with other people. We need to focus and understand not only our life history but also try to keep track of our mood swings and the way we react oftentimes and why we do so. The way we behave and why we do so. However, at times we are irritated with the slightest things and do not even take notice of why we do certain things frequently. “Self-awareness is so important, you have to be aware of your triggers, of the patterns that your triggers lead you to” (Zebian, 2021). We need to reflect upon why certain actions or words trigger us oftentimes. Why does a certain person turn off our mood or why does rain make us sad? What is the pattern that we have intertwined with certain things? How badly do we react whenever we are triggered, do we end up hurting ourselves or others? We need to get a Know-how of ourselves. The way we see other people usually reflects how we see ourselves. Thus, we need to accept ourselves, but before doing it, we should make sure of knowing ourselves. “If you don’t know yourself, you can’t accept yourself because you don’t know who you are accepting” (Zebian, 2021).

“Who am I? Ask yourself that question. Why do I believe what I believe? Why do I live the way I do? Ask yourself these questions. Don’t seek the answers from the external world” (Zebian, 2021).

Zebian focuses on asking questions about the things that are happening in our lives. We need to load questions and keep on continuing to do so until and unless we find the answers we are looking for. We need to ask ourselves questions, find answers to those questions within us, and then be sure of who we really are. How many times do we often find ourselves asking about our beliefs, existence, way of living, priorities, and choices? People should dig deep into the mysteries of themselves and find the best solutions by asking questions. People should not depend on other people around them to provide them with answers or solutions. If they want to accept themselves for who they are then they need to sit with themselves and initiate self-talk to find answers to their questions. That can lead them to self-awareness and thus self-acceptance. “Once you become aware of yourself, historically and in the moment, you are golden” (Zebian, 2021). You get to know the real you and thus start living inside of you.

## **Heal Yourself**

“Do u need the person that hurt you, to tell you, I hurt you and I'm sorry and I feel awful that I did it? It's beautiful to get it but do you need it? Do you not know how painful the pain was when you experience it, and you want them to tell you how painful it was and permit you to feel it? You don't need it you want it” (Zebian, 2021).

The lines shed light on the healing process after getting into a toxic relationship. When we are mistreated or abandoned by someone we love, we tend to seek their permission to heal ourselves. We waste so much of our time and energy and above all, we waste ourselves for the other person's permission so that we can heal ourselves. Zebian poses the rhetorical question of how we so badly want another person's permission to feel the way that we feel but we do not need it. We at certain times believe that when a person realizes that they have hurt us only then will we be able to heal ourselves but that is not the way we believe it to be. When we go through some painful experience, we find it hard to get past it and certainly need other people to feel the pain that we have felt. “We wait for people to acknowledge it. You know what you went through. You don't need them to acknowledge it” (Zebian, 2021). The experience that we go through certainly shapes us and mends us in one way or another, to let ourselves feel the pain, we do not need someone else to allow us to feel it. We do not need someone else to tell us how and when to feel it. We need to have enough self-awareness and understanding of our feelings that we should not give anyone else permission to exploit us in any way. We know what we went through, and we need to heal ourselves from it.

“Someone who has the power to destroy you and they use that power, why would you trust them with rebuilding you?” (Zebian, 2021).

Zebian emphasized the fact that the person who breaks us cannot be the same person to heal us. If we want to heal and free ourselves then we need to know it is only us that can heal us and no one else from the outside is going to come and fix us. If we are willing to be healed and let go of the past that we have been holding onto, we need to give ourselves permission to heal rather than leave others to make that decision for us.

If someone knew we loved them and still chose to break us, would we trust them again?

Are we willing to trust that person more than we trust ourselves? “The one who broke you cannot heal you. You must heal you. You can't expect the person who broke you to bring back those pieces and say I'm going to put you back together” (Zebian, 2021). She shares the experience of independence and living a life of our own, decided by ourselves. We must depend on ourselves, if we know we are hurt then we are also the only one who needs to know that we need to heal. We are not bound to know or have anybody's acknowledgment to know that we need to heal. We, for sure, do not need someone else to build us back. We need to depend on ourselves to heal from the inside triggers and traumas.

“When pain knocks on your door, let it in, sit with it, have tea with it” (Zebian, 2021).

Zebian is carrying a positive stance on receiving pain from wherever it reaches out to us. We must let our feelings in. We must allow it to feel what we are feeling to move on. We need not repress or run away from our feelings. Instead, we need to hold on to them, let them in, and be friends with them. To fully love ourselves, we need to love everything inside of us, every part of us needs to be embraced by us. Most of the time we are afraid of feeling pain and as a result it keeps on growing inside us, eating us little by little from the inside. If we want to make peace with ourselves, we must open ourselves to everything that is inside us. “That door is inside of you. You need to open the door in yourself to feel the pain in you” (Zebian, 2021). For healing, we need to seek the permission of our inside selves and let all that is inside of us pour out. And never stop us from doing it, listen to our heart, and should act accordingly. “Go public within yourself. When you're vulnerable you're open to injury, you're open to pain. You give the power to someone to love you and to break you” (Zebian, 2021).

Zebian is emphasizing swallowing the pain that we endure inside us. We need to be gentle and vulnerable to ourselves. We need not fear getting hurt or getting injured in the process. If we get hurt, we are required to make sure that we are there for us to heal, if we are injured make sure we tend to our wounds. We need to be sensitive and open to every part of us and love ourselves just like we desire to be loved. Being vulnerable is what makes us who we are, be vulnerable with each part of us that resides within us.



**Building Home**

“When you build your home in other people, you give them the power to make you homeless” (Zebian, 2021).

This line by Zebian utters the fact of building and rebuilding a home inside us. Most of us feel like there is an empty void inside of us. We have everything around us, everything that we want but there always seems like something is missing. We all know that feeling but we are never able to find out what it is that thing that seems to be missing. It certainly is because we are determined to fill our void by the existence of someone else. We usually try and find solace and comfort in other people around us. It is due to this reason that when that person walks out of our life or does not give us the required attention, we fall apart. We get this itching, breathtaking feeling inside of us that we cannot seem to get rid of. “The biggest mistake that we make is that we build homes in other people, we build those homes and decorate them with love and kindness, every home that we want to come to at the end of the day. So, when those people walk away from those homes walk away with them and suddenly, we feel empty” (Zebian, 2021). She says, if we want to love ourselves then we need to build a home inside of us. And try to fill that void by building a home inside us. If we want to survive and love ourselves to the fullest, we need to belong to our home, not the home that we build outside but the home that resides within us. To complete the emptiness inside, we need to love ourselves and accept our existence for who we are and what we are for.

“This is the way I deserve to be treated and if they choose to treat you in a way that you cannot accept you walk away” (Zebian, 2021).

She emphasizes the need for building a home within us. She is of the view that, once you build your home inside of you, you start realizing your value and acknowledge the fact that you do not owe anyone anything or nobody owes anything to you either. This is when the shift happens and every time someone treats us the way that we certainly never want to be treated, we simply walk away. We choose to walk away because we are aware of our worth, more worthy than the way we are being treated. “The foundation of your home is self-acceptance and self-awareness. Once you have both these elements, you can build whatever home you want” (Zebian, 2021). Becoming aware of oneself is where the roots of building a home inside of him reside. We want to belong somewhere, we want to belong to our inner selves and our inner selves should belong to us, then

we need to accept ourselves for who we are and build the building block for our vulnerable home, inside us.

### **Accept the Change**

“The ending itself is not what you need to change, the storyline is what you need to change, and that is what is in your hands” (Zebian, 2021).

The words highlight the life perspective of people, and the way people create their stories and bring changes in the storyline of their lives. Almost all the time, every one of us knows we need change. We strive for change, but we also fear change. We are afraid of losing ourselves on the road that leads to change. We fear the fact that what if we do take a step forward and move towards the change, but it ends up in vain, or we certainly end up in the same position that we already are in right now. Zebian provokes this thought and encourages us to change our perception. No one can guarantee the outcome unless we reach the outcome, but it is all about the way we think and certainly act. If we improve and think in a better, positive way then possibly it is going to lead us towards something good. It is the perception that we need to work on, the storyline. If this new path is going to lead you to yourself then take it. It will certainly feel uncomfortable, but it will be worth the shot. We are going to get scared, and we should be, but your fear should not be bigger than our determination to change our path. We need to choose the path towards change wisely, embracing ourselves, accepting ourselves, and loving ourselves for who we truly are. We need to do everything that we can to make the change happen.

### **CONCLUSION**

Through textual analysis of Najwa Zebian’s interview with Lisa Bilyeu, the researchers have interpreted the importance of self-acceptance and self-love. Zebian in her interview reflects upon the theme of self-love that she has emphasized over in her works. Through this research, the insight into different phases and steps that can lead toward self-acceptance is interpreted. It is about self-acceptance and love after the betrayal of the beloved. Most of the time people often struggle with self-worth after they are rejected and abandoned. It sheds light on childhood traumas and fears, self-forgiveness and how to soothe the child within oneself, the unnecessary expectations from external people, and how one can seek acknowledgment and acceptance from the outside world. It

also sheds light on how an individual can embrace themselves by building a home within themselves, knowing and understanding themselves better, being open to injuries, and accepting change within themselves. It is about setting boundaries and protecting one's vulnerability. The roots of healing reside in self-acceptance and self-love. It is about discovering one's self-worth and not letting anyone ever abuse them in any way.

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