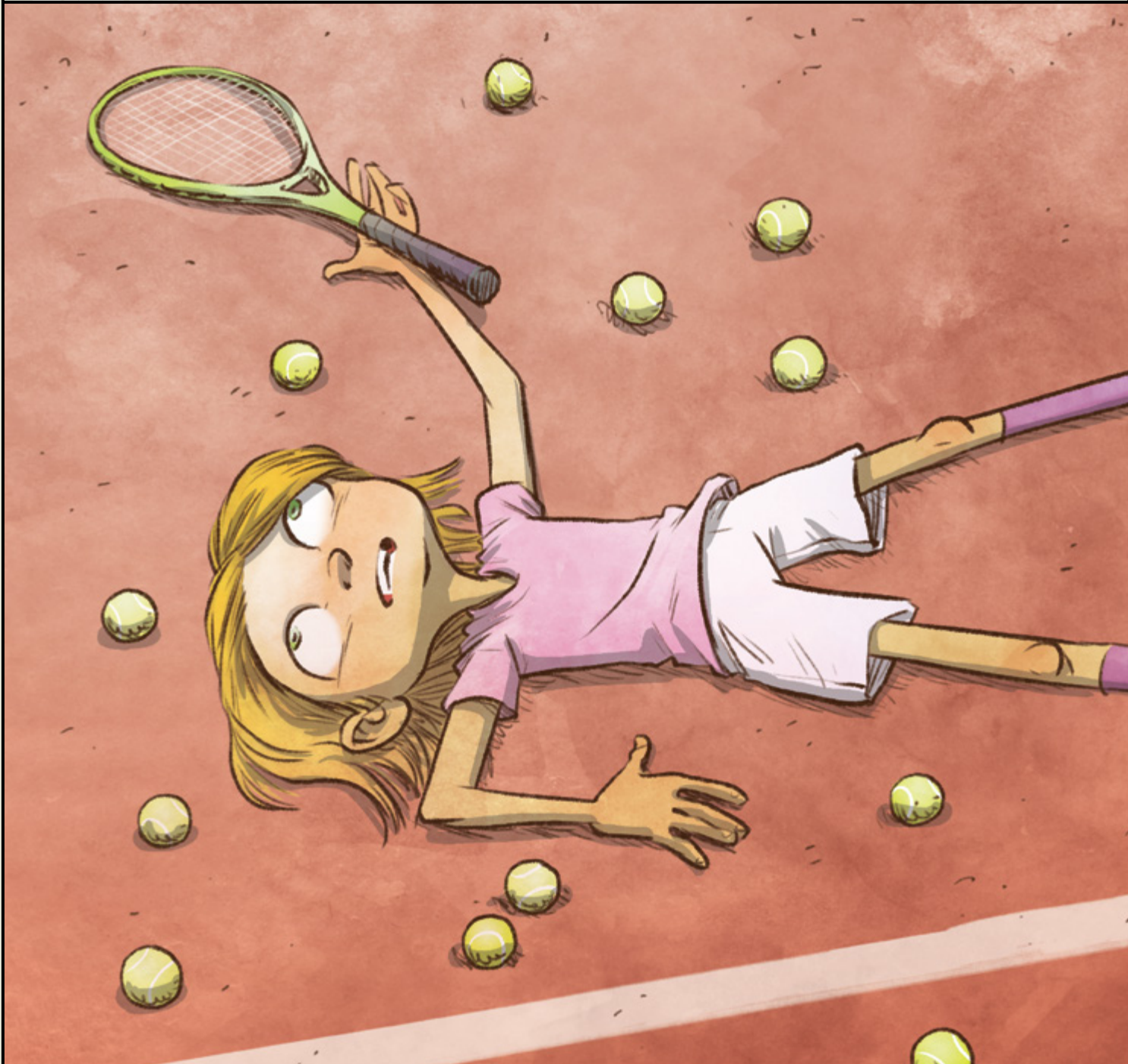


ARE YOU YOUR OWN WORST ENEMY?



By Amanda Dunn
Church Magazines

TRY THESE TIPS FOR befriending yourself instead of putting yourself down.

The day I played tennis for the first time was also the day I vowed never to set foot on a tennis court again. My friend had offered to teach me how to play, and I thought it sounded like fun. I'd seen him and some other friends play before, and it didn't look that hard.

I was right: tennis wasn't hard—it was *impossible*. From the get-go, my hold on the racket felt awkward, I didn't know how to stand, and I kept hitting the ball either too hard or too soft—that is, on the rare occasions when I actually hit the ball.

My friend tried teaching me some techniques, but no matter what I did, I wasn't improving. On top of that, the sun was scorching hot, and I was sweating in my poor outfit choice of a gray shirt and thick black pants. An hour into it, I couldn't handle it anymore.

"I can't do this." I told my friend as I sunk down onto the court. "I am the least athletic person in the world!"

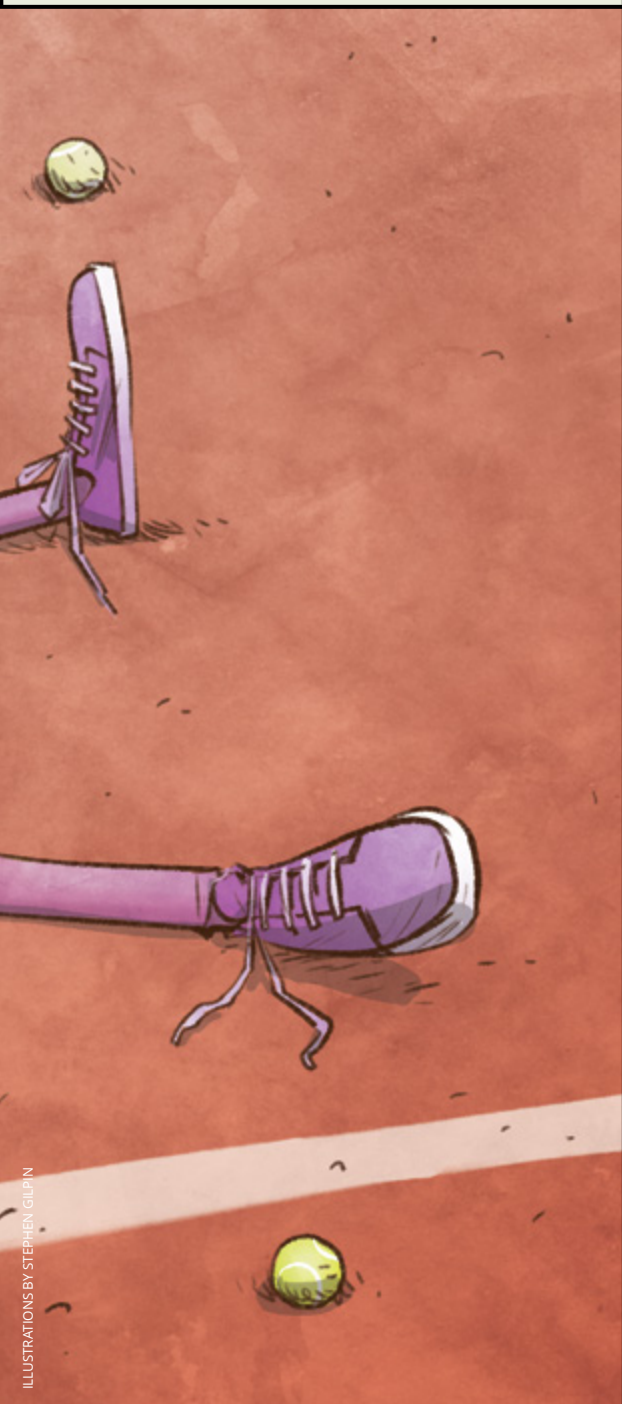
He came and sat by me. "It's OK," he said. "We don't have to keep going. But you can hardly beat yourself up because you aren't Serena Williams your first day on the court. You're just learning."

BE YOUR FRIEND, NOT YOUR ENEMY

We went home, but I thought about that day a lot after that. My friend was right—I *was* just learning. He had been patient with me, so why couldn't I be patient with myself? Eventually, I broke my vow and decided to try tennis again. Guess what? I even hit a few balls over the net! So I kept at it. Now it's one of my favorite hobbies!

Sometimes we develop a negative self-image because we are the ones who have to live with our own flaws and failures. But Heavenly Father doesn't want us to treat ourselves badly or give up—He wants us to care for ourselves just like a friend would.

As we acknowledge the ways we sometimes treat ourselves like enemies, we can learn how to combat self-rivaling behaviors and be kinder to ourselves with the help of our Savior, Jesus Christ.



Here are descriptions of four types of self-enemies—impatient, fearful, comparative, and natural. Take a look at each one and see if they sound familiar. If you are your own worst enemy in any of these ways, try to become your own best friend instead by following each friendly tip.



DON'T DEMEAN YOURSELF

“As children of God, we should not demean or vilify ourselves, as if beating up on ourselves is somehow going to make us the person God wants us to become. . . . I would hope we could pursue personal improvement in a way that doesn’t include . . . demolishing our self-esteem. That is *not* what the Lord wants for Primary children or anyone else who honestly sings, ‘I’m trying to be like Jesus.’”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Oct. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 40).

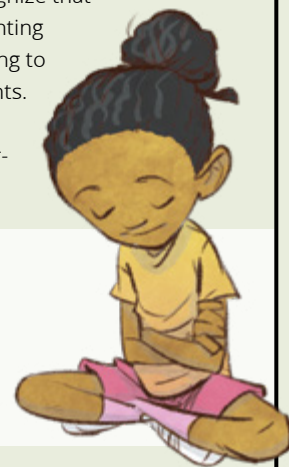
THE IMPATIENT ENEMY

VS.

THE PATIENT FRIEND

If you are an impatient enemy to yourself—just like I was that day on the court—you think if you don’t get something right the first time, you’ll never get it right. You feel like you should be doing everything perfectly right now and don’t want to wait to give yourself time to grow.

If you’re a patient friend to yourself, you tell yourself what my friend told me—you’re just learning! You recognize that learning means you’ll make mistakes, but you can improve. You also recognize that part of learning is repenting when you sin and striving to keep the commandments. You accept that it takes time to become the person you want to be.



A FRIENDLY TIP

Try slowing down as you say your morning and nighttime prayers. Spend a little extra time talking to God. Ponder what you want to say to Him, and listen to what He tells you through the Spirit.

THE FEARFUL ENEMY

VS.

THE REASSURING FRIEND

If you are a fearful enemy to yourself, you worry excessively about the future. You might be afraid to talk about what you believe or to share your talents. You struggle making decisions and maybe even fear you’ll never be good enough for Heavenly Father.

When you are a reassuring friend to yourself, you dispel fear with faith. You seek peace about the future when you pray. You share your talents, even if you’re still developing them. You know Heavenly Father loves you and will help you make good decisions through the Holy Ghost.



A FRIENDLY TIP

Consider the blessings you see in your life now. Thank Heavenly Father for them. Write them down. Remember things you’re already doing well when you ponder ways to improve.

THE COMPARATIVE ENEMY

vs.

THE CONFIDENT FRIEND

If you are a comparative enemy to yourself, you are frequently concerned with what everyone else is doing. You compare your appearance, testimony, talents, and status to the people around you. It's hard for you to recognize what makes you unique and special to Heavenly Father.

As a confident friend to yourself, you're more concerned with being a better *you* than you are with being more like others. Jesus Christ is your ultimate example, and you know God sees wonderful potential in you. You congratulate others on their abilities and accomplishments without demeaning your own.



A FRIENDLY TIP

Try standing in front of the mirror and looking at yourself for one minute each morning for a week. Imagine what Heavenly Father sees in you—beyond your appearance or status. To really boost your self-confidence, stay off social media for that whole week.

THE NATURAL ENEMY

vs.

OUR ETERNAL FRIEND

If you give in to the natural man, you are being an enemy to yourself by hindering your own spiritual progress. The natural man or woman is someone who gives in to passions and appetites of the flesh instead of listening to the Spirit (see Guide to the Scriptures, "Natural Man"). King Benjamin taught that "the natural man is an enemy to God" (Mosiah 3:19).

The adversary wants us to feed natural desires and ignore our divine identity. But God knows our worth and always roots for us—even when we don't. He loves us and sent His Son so that we could repent.

Jesus Christ loves us and is our Friend. Because of Him, each of us can "[put] off the natural man and [become] a saint" as we listen to the Spirit (Mosiah 3:19). We can overcome our impatient, fearful, or comparative behaviors—even if that takes time.

A FRIENDLY TIP

Learn about Jesus Christ and follow His example each day. Remember His sacrifice and how that reflects your worth. Think how He would treat you, and treat yourself that way.



CONCLUSION

We aren't perfect. We sometimes feel scared, embarrassed, or unsure. Conditions around us can make things harder, like the hot sun did when I tried to learn tennis. In fact, with everything going on in life, it can sometimes seem impossible to just get along with ourselves.

But through Jesus Christ, we can find strength and hope, conquer our weaknesses, and become more like Him. And since He is our Friend, we become more like Him when we are friends to ourselves too. **NE**