

Radical Acceptance Skills

Radical acceptance means accepting life as it is in the moment, even when things aren't going your way.

Why foster Radical Acceptance? There are important examples of Radical Acceptance in the Bible. Jesus prayed on the eve of his crucifixion, "Not my will, but yours, be done." In the Lord's Prayer, he also instructed people to pray, "Thy will be done." These examples show that acceptance is not only a matter of obedience, but that cultivating Radical Acceptance Skills can reduce emotional suffering. It also helps people connect to the moment with clarity and some peace. Instead of feeling abandoned by God, they can look for how he is working in the present moment. This keeps them from becoming emotionally dysregulated and positions them to respond to the moment effectively.

Radical Acceptance is not: approval, passivity, or opposed to change. Even as people accept the current moment as it is, they can also problem solve and pray. The next moment may be different if they respond effectively to what is happening now.

Radical Acceptance Skills Exercise*

Identify something in your life that you are having trouble accepting.

What is the intensity of your distress? (rate from 0-100) _____

What is the level of your acceptance? (rate from 0-100) _____

Check the facts to make sure the thing you are trying to accept is actually true. Look out for judgments, interpretations and opinions. Rewrite if needed. For example: "I'm never going to get a job" becomes, "I didn't get the job I was hoping to land."

Use these strategies to help you get to acceptance:

- Notice or acknowledge that you are questioning or fighting reality.
- Allow yourself to feel the painful feelings associated with the reality that is difficult.
- Acknowledge that life can be worth living even when there is pain.
- Imagine how you would react if the thing that you are having difficulty accepting were really true.
- Remind yourself that God is sovereign and that he loves you.
- Remind yourself that God is with you in your difficult circumstances and understands your pain.
- Change your body posture while contemplating the thing you need to accept. Your face and body connect to your brain.
 - Willing hands: Place your hands on your lap or your thighs. With hands unclenched, turn your hands outward, with palms up and fingers relaxed.
 - Half-smile: Relax your face, let the corners of your lips go slightly up, adopt a serene facial expression.
- Choose to turn your mind toward acceptance.
- Go to scripture. For example, Psalm 23:4, Psalm 139, Isaiah 43: 1-2, Psalm 16:8, Psalm 139, Psalm 34:18.

After practicing one or more of the above strategies...

What is the intensity of your distress? (rate from 0-100) _____

What is the level of your acceptance? (rate from 0-100) _____

You may need to actively practice acceptance over and over again.

*Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition, by Marsha M. Linehan.
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