
Facing Hard Moments with God

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It is difficult to imagine life as it used to be after more than a year of living in the midst of a global pandemic. As we move toward re-opening, many are feeling uneasy and anxious about returning to school and work, hugs and handshakes, and social gatherings. In fact, the American Psychological Association reports that Americans are experiencing the highest levels of stress since April 2020, and that half of surveyed adults are uneasy about returning to in-person interactions.

Just as we adapted to the sudden changes of distancing at the start of the pandemic, we now have to navigate a re-entry into living life together, which is another hard reality to face. Escaping the hardship of a moment is tempting, but denying reality can lead to more suffering.

Why accept the moment for what it is? Jesus taught this through his actions. In the Lord's Prayer, he instructed people to pray, "Thy will be done." Jesus prayed to the Father on the eve of his crucifixion, "Not as I will, but as you will." He departed the Garden of Gethsemane with clarity, peace, and focus in the midst of violence and chaos. These examples show that acceptance is not only a matter of obedience, but that cultivating a skill, such as the radical acceptance skill can reduce emotional suffering. It also helps us connect to the moment with clarity and greater peace. Instead of feeling abandoned by God, we can look for how he is working in the present moment.

Radical Acceptance is not: approval, passivity, or opposition to change. Even as we accept the current moment as it is, we can seek his help to respond differently. This keeps us from becoming emotionally imbalanced and will help us respond to each new moment effectively.

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Radical acceptance skills can walk us through how to face even our toughest moments so that we do not overwhelm ourselves and can help us stay connected to God and his word.

Radical Acceptance Skills Exercise*

Identify something in your life that you are having trouble accepting. Write it down so you have it in front of you.

What is the intensity of your distress? _____

Rate from 0 (no acceptance) – 100 (complete acceptance)

What is the level of your acceptance? _____

Rate from 0 (no acceptance) – 100 (complete acceptance)

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 survive getting on a subway to get to work.” becomes, “I need to wear my mask and keep appropriate distance when I’m taking public transportation.”

Use these strategies to help you get to acceptance:

- Be Curious about your internal processes:
 - Notice or acknowledge that you are questioning or fighting reality.
 - Allow yourself to feel the painful feelings associated with the reality that is difficult
 - Name and verbalize/express your feelings.
- Use your imagination to receive comfort from God:
 - Imagine you are before God and tell him about your feelings
 - Imagine God understanding your pain
 - Verbalize what God may be saying in response to you.
 - Be reminded of his presence with you
- Change your body posture while contemplating the thing you need to accept. Your face and body connect to your brain:



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- 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.
- Meditate on scripture to receive comfort and gain confidence in his sovereignty and love for you.
 - Psalm 23:4
 - Psalm 139
 - Isaiah 43:1-2
 - Psalm 16:8
 - Psalm 34:18
- Choose to turn your mind toward acceptance.

After practicing one or more of the above strategies, evaluate again.

What is the intensity of your distress? _____

Rate from 0 (no acceptance) – 100 (complete acceptance)

What is the level of your acceptance? _____

Rate from 0 (no acceptance) – 100 (complete acceptance)

You may need to actively practice acceptance over and over again until your distress is low and your acceptance is high.

**Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition, by Marsha M. Linehan. Copyright 2015 by Marsha M. Linehan.*