

## Distress Tolerance: Accepting Reality

*Many of our skills focus on changing your behavior in order to change the situation.  
But when there is **no way** to change the situation . . .*

### Accepting Reality: Choices We Can Make

Four things to do when a serious problem comes into your life:

1. Figure out how to solve the problem.
2. Change how you feel about the problem.
3. Accept it.
4. Stay miserable—or make things worse (by acting on your impulsive urges).

*When you can't solve the problem or change your emotions about the problem, try acceptance as a way to reduce your suffering.*

### Why Bother Accepting Reality?

- ✓ Rejecting reality does not change reality.
- ✓ Changing reality requires first accepting reality.
- ✓ Rejecting reality turns pain into suffering.
- ✓ Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, anger, shame, sadness, bitterness, or other painful emotions.

### Radical Acceptance

- ✓ RADICAL ACCEPTANCE is the skill of accepting the things you cannot change.
- ✓ "RADICAL" = complete and total accepting in mind, heart, and body.
- ✓ "ACCEPTANCE" = seeing reality for what it is, even if you don't like it.
- ✓ Acceptance means to acknowledge, recognize, endure—not give up or give in.
- ✓ It is when you stop fighting reality, stop throwing tantrums about reality, and let go of bitterness. It is the opposite of "Why me?" It is "Things are as they are."
- ✓ Life can be worth living, even with painful events in it.

List one important thing that you need to accept in your life now: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List one less important thing you need to accept this week: \_\_\_\_\_

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### HANDOUT 10.3

## Distress Tolerance: Radical Acceptance, Step by Step

1. Observe that you are questioning or fighting reality (“It shouldn’t be this way”).
2. Remind yourself that the unpleasant reality is just as it is and cannot be changed (“This is what happened”).
3. Remind yourself that there are causes for the reality. Acknowledge that some sort of history led up to this moment. Notice that given these causes and the history that led up to this moment, this reality had to occur just this way (“This is how things happened that made them this way”).
4. Practice accepting with the whole self (mind, body, and spirit). Be creative in finding ways to involve your whole self. Use accepting self-talk, but also consider using relaxation, mindfulness of your breath, going to a place that helps bring you to acceptance, or imagery.
5. Practice opposite action. List all the behaviors you would do if you did accept the facts. Then act as if you have already accepted the facts. Engage in the behaviors that you would do if you really had accepted.
6. Cope ahead with events that seem unacceptable. Imagine (in your mind’s eye) believing what you don’t want to accept. Rehearse in your mind what you would do if you accepted what seems unacceptable.
7. Attend to your body sensations as you think about what you need to accept.
8. Allow disappointment, sadness, or grief to arise within you.
9. Acknowledge that life can be worth living, even when there’s pain.
10. Do pros and cons if you find yourself resisting practicing acceptance.

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