

Acceptance:

Acceptance is the willingness to let go of your emotional opposition to the reality of “what is.” While acceptance sounds passive, it is not necessarily. It doesn’t mean you won’t take steps to change what is possible to change. What if you don’t, for instance, get hired for the job you desperately want and need? If you emotionally accept that reality, you will still search for other jobs but you will do so with far less drama or angst. Acceptance is saying “Yes” to reality. It doesn’t mean “Reality is good” or “Reality is desirable.” Acceptance of a situation does not mean that the situation is morally acceptable. It means “It is.” Once again, slowly breathe in and out, then say these words: “I accept the situation as it is right now even if I don’t like it.” Breathing in acceptance when the situation is painful is like being inoculated for a disease. It allows you to take in a bit of what ails you to ward off the greater, more deadly disease. When you accept what is, you can then figure out with greater calmness and clarity what, if anything, you might do about your circumstances.

When things are not going your way, and especially when it’s impossible for them to go your way because events have already transpired and cannot be changed, can you let go of the idea that things should go your way? Some of my clients have flash-fire tempers. They get annoyed easily at traffic jams, long checkout lines, and just about anything that goes wrong.

“It sounds like you are telling me you should never be inconvenienced while driving or shopping,” I say to those who are resisting acceptance.

“But I’m in a hurry!” they reply.

“But is it realistic to expect perfectly moving traffic just because you happen to be in a hurry?” I ask.

When you resist reality, you hand over the power of your emotional well-being to that reality—to other people or events. You are basically saying that for you to be happy or at peace, others must act in a particular way at a particular time, otherwise you have the right to be upset. Is that really how you want to relate to the world?

Pain, loss, and injustice are inevitable. They are part of life’s givens. To accept these givens is not to sit back helplessly in the face of them. It is always good and desirable to do what you can to ease pain, comfort the grieving, meet challenges, and treat others and ourselves kindly and fairly. Acceptance frees you to use your energy wisely rather than deplete it with unhealthy attitudes and endless questions that only add to your pain.

Anytime you are in emotional pain and begging an answer to the question, “Why did this have to happen?” it means there is a bridge in front of you and the Path of Acceptance waits. If you emotionally oppose the Path of Acceptance, you will have no choice but to turn back and walk its counterpart: the Path of Resistance.

The Acceptance of Joyful Humility

Everything in the universe, from a subatomic particle to the largest star, contains energy. Every

emotion you express carries its own level of energy. The emotion of anger feels different from sadness. Contentment feels different from joy.

One of the most powerful and overlooked sources of emotional energy is genuine humility. A humble heart embraces emotional acceptance, and acceptance nurtures a humble heart. Humility is a misunderstood quality. As with acceptance, there is resistance to it by people who view having control as vital to their psychological survival. The need for control is not inherently bad, but it is an expression of the lower self, fueled by both fear and desire. It serves a useful purpose, but only to a point.

When control becomes an end in itself rather than a means to a higher end, it leads only to misery. The more humble you are, the less you need. You don't need to control others or to seek validation from them to prove your worth. You don't need to win. You don't need to manage the impressions others have of you. Think of all that emotional energy required to maintain appearances, to fight for the next trophy, to insist that your life should proceed in a certain way and people should act toward you in a certain way.

Humble, you will not be easily let down by others because you nurture the view that all of us fall short at times. Humble, the more joy you will find in the simplest things. Less humble, the more you will judge, blame, compare, compete, feel entitled—and see things not as they are but as you need them to be. You know you are not being humble when you are not feeling acceptance or some amount of joy.

Humility and the Lower Self

Humility allows for possibilities that our ego refuses to acknowledge. In a humble state of mind, you remove your blinders, seeing things as they are instead of the way your ego needs them to be. In J.R.R. Tolkien's timeless saga, *The Lord of the Rings*, the wizard Gandalf holds back the hand of young Frodo, who wishes to end the life of the menacing creature Gollum. Gandalf wisely advises Frodo that one can never foresee all ends and that even the things we despise may later play a role in our redemption. Unhindered by lower-self fears, there is honesty in humility. If you wish to know a deeper truth, be open to hearing more answers even if the information you already have supports what you want to hear.

With emotional acceptance and the energy of humility, you can coexist peacefully with opposite attitudes with which you would otherwise battle: wanting answers but knowing they may never come; loving another but not always feeling loved; risking but wanting to be safe; having convictions but being open to a greater truth; seeking togetherness but needing space; surrendering but possessing some control. Acceptance is inclusive and tolerates uncertainty. Resistance is exclusive, intolerant of uncertainty.

Don't Judge Too Quickly

In order to cultivate emotional acceptance and reduce emotional resistance, notice how often and how quickly you judge others or situations. Having standards of right and wrong is not the problem. Setting boundaries is not the problem. But when you impulsively judge others, there is

usually something about them, and yourself, that you do not understand. If you desire to be less judgmental, begin with acceptance. Simply say “Yes” to what happens and try to understand it before you set out judging it or trying to change it. People are often surprised at how often their first reaction to a person, an event, a thought, or a feeling is a resounding “No.” You can see how easy it is to emotionally resist the reality of the moment, fail to understand something, and thereby create unnecessary angst.

Do you take things too personally? Are you easily insulted or disappointed by others? Those reactions stem from your ego, which has its basis in fear and desire. It might sadden you if someone you care about overlooks you, disappoints you, isn't there when you need them, or rejects you. But what others might say or do to you often says much more about them than about you.

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Grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Or

Give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,
courage to change the things which should be changed,
and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.
Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace.

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

"And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation -- some fact of my life -- unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment.

Dr. Paul Ohliger, from Alcoholics Anonymous, the Dr.'s story
The Lyrics of Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be):
When I was just a little girl
I asked my mother, what will I be

Will I be pretty, will I be rich
Here's what she said to me.

Que Sera, Sera,
Whatever will be, will be
The future's not ours, to see
Que Sera, Sera
What will be, will be.

When I was young, I fell in love
I asked my sweetheart what lies ahead
Will we have rainbows, day after day
Here's what my sweetheart said.

Que Sera, Sera,
Whatever will be, will be
The future's not ours, to see
Que Sera, Sera
What will be, will be.

Now I have children of my own
They ask their mother, what will I be
Will I be handsome, will I be rich
I tell them tenderly.

Que Sera, Sera,
Whatever will be, will be
The future's not ours, to see
Que Sera, Sera
What will be, will be.

Beatles – Let It Be

When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be
For though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

And when the night is cloudy there is still a light that shines on me
Shine until tomorrow, let it be
I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be