

# How to Practice Radical Acceptance

## DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills

**Radical acceptance can be difficult to put into practice.** This worksheet describes ten techniques for engaging in radical acceptance, and helps you determine what you may want to radically accept in your life.

### Techniques for radical acceptance



#### Observe

Notice that you're fighting or rejecting reality. You might have thoughts like, "It's not fair," "Why me?" or, "It shouldn't be this way."

*Example: Jordan's girlfriend just broke up with him, taking him completely by surprise. He notices himself thinking she shouldn't have done it and that he didn't deserve it - that it wasn't fair, and if he could just convince her she's wrong, they can get back together.*



#### State what happened

State or write what happened in plain language. Remind yourself that reality is as it is.

*Jordan states to himself, "Leigh broke up with me. This is what happened."*



#### Remember that everything has a cause

Acknowledge that there was a history or chain of events that led up to this reality. Consider how we are all affected by all sorts of events and factors. See the logical progression from cause to outcome.

*Jordan considers. He didn't hear a lot of reasons for why Leigh broke up with him, except that she wasn't happy in the relationship anymore. He thinks about how both he and Leigh made less of an effort in the relationship over time. He considers that she values excitement and spontaneity, and he values calm and stability, and reflects on where these values came from. He thinks about times he's broken up with someone for similar reasons.*



#### Accept with your whole self

Radical acceptance happens in the mind, body, and spirit. Use what works for you to engage all parts of yourself. You might consider thinking about what you need to accept while using mindfulness or relaxation exercises; saying what you need to accept out loud; using prayer or imagery; processing while doing something active like hiking, etc.

*Jordan notices he is hunched over and his fists are clenched. He takes a deep breath, relaxes body, and tries to let reality in. He visualizes facing the reality head on.*



#### Practice opposite action

Imagine what you would do if you accepted the facts 100% (or, imagine how you will act in the future when you are completely over the situation). Do these things now.

*Jordan reflects that if he were totally over the breakup, he would be calm and open to talking about it. He would get back to spending time with his friends and on his hobbies.*

\*This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.



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## DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills



### **Cope ahead**

Imagine that you believe what you don't want to accept, 100%. Visualize how you will think and what you will do when you have accepted reality.

*Jordan casts his mind into the future. In the future, he might think, "It didn't work out between us. It really hurt at the time, but we weren't the right fit for each other."*



### **Attend to your body**

Sometimes people try their best to numb or ignore their body sensations when they are distressed. Notice your body sensations as you think about what you have to accept.

*Jordan notices he feels a pit in his stomach when he thinks about the breakup. Usually he would do something to distract himself from the feeling or just take a nap. Now he just notices.*



### **Feel your feelings**

Just because you radically accept something doesn't mean you have no feelings about it. Allow yourself to feel disappointment, sadness, or grief. These feelings are natural and often *signal* acceptance - and are eventually followed by calm and freedom.

*Jordan does not like talking about it, but he knows he's feeling grief and loss. Rather than push those feelings down or ignoring them, he lets them exist.*



### **Pros and cons**

If you're having trouble engaging in acceptance, try writing out the pros and cons.



### **Remember**

Life is worth living, even if parts of it are painful.



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## DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills

### Practicing radical acceptance yourself

Think about what you need to radically accept in your life. These can be big, very important things or small things just affecting your day or week. Often, we may need to radically accept situations that prompt us to say:

- “That’s not fair!”
- “It shouldn’t be this way”
- “I should have / I shouldn’t have”
- “Why me?”
- “This is wrong”
- “Yes, but...”

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....

Above, use the small dashed lines on the right to rate how much you accept each statement from 0 (absolutely not accepting it) to 5 (complete acceptance and at peace with it).

Check the statements above:

- Check the facts: make sure your statements are not interpretations, assumptions, or opinions.
- Make sure your statements aren’t judgments (e.g., using words like good, bad, evil).

If you need to, rewrite your statements below:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....

Pick **one** statement to focus on and circle or star it above. Consider the statement with your wise mind. Check off any of the techniques you use to accept that the statement is a reality of your life:

- Observe yourself rejecting reality
- State what happened in plain language
- Remind yourself that everything has a cause
- Accept with your whole self: mind, body, and spirit
- Practice opposite action
- Cope ahead
- Attend to your body
- Feel your feelings
- Remember life is worth living
- Used pros and cons

Re-rate your level of acceptance after trying one or more techniques above: .....

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# Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

## You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



**325+**  
Companies Reviewed



**3,625+**  
Hours of Firsthand Experience



**1,545+**  
Data Points Analyzed



### [Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

### [Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



### [Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

### [Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





# Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

## [Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



## [Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.