DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 11

(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 8–9a)

Radical Acceptance

(When you cannot keep painful events and emotions from coming your way.)

WHAT IS RADICAL ACCEPTANCE?

1. Radical means *all the way*, complete and total.
2. It is accepting in your mind, your heart, and your body.
3. It's when you stop fighting reality, stop throwing tantrums because reality is not the way you want it, and let go of bitterness.

WHAT HAS TO BE ACCEPTED?

1. Reality is as it is (the facts about the past and the present are the facts, even if you don't like them).
2. There are limitations on the future for everyone (but only realistic limitations need to be accepted).
3. Everything has a cause (including events and situations that cause you pain and suffering).
4. Life can be worth living even with painful events in it.

WHY ACCEPT REALITY?

1. Rejecting reality does not change reality.
2. Changing reality requires first accepting reality.
3. Pain can't be avoided; it is nature's way of signaling that something is wrong.
4. Rejecting reality turns pain into suffering.
5. Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, bitterness, anger, sadness, shame, or other painful emotions.
6. Acceptance may lead to sadness, but deep calmness usually follows.
7. The path out of hell is through misery. By refusing to accept the misery that is part of climbing out of hell, you fall back into hell.

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Radical Acceptance: Factors That Interfere

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE IS NOT:

Approval, compassion, love, passivity, or against change.

FACTORS THAT INTERFERE WITH ACCEPTANCE

- ❑ 1. You don't have the skills for acceptance; you do not know how to accept really painful events and facts.
- ❑ 2. You believe that if you accept a painful event, you are making light of it or are approving of the facts, and that nothing will be done to change or prevent future painful events.
- ❑ 3. Emotions get in the way (unbearable sadness; anger at the person or group that caused the painful event; rage at the injustice of the world; overwhelming shame about who you are; guilt about your own behavior).
- ❑ Other: _____

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 11B

(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 9, 9a)

Practicing Radical Acceptance Step by Step

- ❑ Observe that you are questioning or fighting reality ("It shouldn't be this way").
- ❑ Remind yourself that the unpleasant reality is just as it is and cannot be changed ("This is what happened").
- ❑ Remind yourself that there are causes for the reality. Acknowledge that some sort of history led up to this very moment. Consider how people's lives have been shaped by a series of factors. Notice that given these causal factors and how history led up to this moment, this reality had to occur just this way ("This is how things happened").
- ❑ 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; half-smiling and willing hands while thinking about what feels unacceptable; prayer; going to a place that helps bring you to acceptance; or imagery.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Attend to body sensations as you think about what you need to accept.
- ❑ Allow disappointment, sadness, or grief to arise within you.
- ❑ Acknowledge that life can be worth living even when there is pain.
- ❑ Do pros and cons if you find yourself resisting practicing acceptance.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 12

(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 8, 8a, 10)

Turning the Mind

TURNING THE MIND is like facing a fork in the road. You have to turn your mind toward the acceptance road, and away from the road of rejecting reality.

TURNING THE MIND is choosing to accept.

The CHOICE to accept does not itself equal acceptance. It just puts you on the path.



TURNING THE MIND, STEP BY STEP

1. **OBSERVE** that you are not accepting. (Look for anger, bitterness, annoyance; avoiding emotions; saying "Why me?", "Why is this happening?", "I can't stand this," "It shouldn't be this way.")
2. Go within yourself and **MAKE AN INNER COMMITMENT** to accept reality as it is.
3. **DO IT AGAIN,** over and over. Keep turning your mind to acceptance each time you come to the fork in the road where you can reject reality or accept it.
4. **DEVELOP A PLAN** for catching yourself in the future when you drift out of acceptance.

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