

Radical Acceptance

[Radical acceptance](#), a concept from dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), is the practice of fully **accepting situations that are beyond our control, thereby reducing the suffering they cause us.**

When we do not accept the reality of a situation—by avoiding our feelings or dwelling on what should or should not have happened—the initial pain is prolonged. Acceptance allows us to experience our emotions and see options for how to move forward.

Radical acceptance does not always come easily, but it is a skill that can be developed. You can **start with small things in your daily life** like getting stuck in traffic or having a computer malfunction. Then you can apply it to major events like the loss of a loved one or the end of a relationship.

[Practicing radical acceptance:](#)

1. **Notice when you have thoughts** like *I can't believe this, why did this happen, I wish things were different, I wonder what could have been, I shouldn't have to deal with this, I'm never going to feel ok about this, if only I had done something different...* Try to accept the reality of the situation. Acknowledge the facts of what happened. Note, acceptance does not mean giving up or agreeing with the situation.
2. **Experiencing your emotions can offer relief** while suppressing your emotions can lead to prolonged suffering, destructive behaviors, and diminished experience of positive feelings. Emotions serve as cues to motivate helpful actions. For example, if you feel lonely, that can be a reminder of how much you value social connection and prompt you to reach out to someone.
3. Accepting reality allows you to **focus your energy on things that you can control**, such as your own self-care. It allows you to problem solve for the current situation rather than getting stuck in thoughts about what should or could have been. If acceptance is a struggle, think about what you would hypothetically do if you did accept the situation, then go ahead and do those things anyway.