

Radical Acceptance Examples

DBT skill

Radical acceptance means accepting something fully, mentally and emotionally, without judgment. It does not require liking or approving of something. It means only that the facts are accepted as reality.

Radical acceptance lets you put energy toward *coping with* a situation, rather than trying to avoid or deny it.

Rodney

Recent divorce

Resisting reality looks like: Following his recent divorce, Rodney is struggling to accept the situation emotionally. Rodney calls his ex-wife daily, even though she rarely answers. He is not moving on with his life because he expects his ex-wife to return any day. When Rodney starts to feel upset, he tells himself: "This will get worked out, she's just going through a phase."

Radical acceptance looks like: Rodney is upset, but beginning to heal. He understands his ex-wife has moved on. He no longer calls her, and he is trying to rebuild his life by spending more time with friends and family. There are still days when he feels lonely, but he accepts this. With time, the bad days become less frequent.

Ashley

Life-altering diagnosis

Resisting reality looks like: After a life-altering diagnosis, Ashley follows her doctor's instructions to make several lifestyle changes. However, she cannot let go of constant thoughts like "why me?" and "this isn't fair." When Ashley has these thoughts, she becomes increasingly angry and resentful.

Radical acceptance looks like: After some time, Ashley realizes that questions like "why me?" don't change the facts, and only cause pain. She comes to accept her diagnosis as an unfortunate reality. Although Ashley still must deal with lifestyle changes, she no longer carries anger and resentment.

Tim

Difficulty in school

Resisting reality looks like: Frustrated with his grades, Tim complains to his friends about his teacher. Instead of adapting to his teacher's unconventional grading style, he insists on doing things his own way. Tim continues to get poor grades and ends up failing the class.

Radical acceptance looks like: Tim is frustrated about his teacher, who seems to be grading papers unfairly. However, Tim knows he must pass the class, so he accepts that he'll have to adapt. He schedules a meeting with his teacher and makes an effort to understand the grading style, allowing him to improve his class performance.