

Acceptance

Acceptance is such an important commodity some have called it "the first law of personal growth."

Acceptance is simply seeing something the way it is and saying, "That's the way it is."

Acceptance is not approval, consent, permission, authorization, sanction, concurrence, agreement, compliance, sympathy, endorsement, confirmation, support, ratification, assistance, advocating, backing, maintaining, authenticating, reinforcing, cultivating, encouraging, furthering, promoting, aiding, abetting, or even liking what is.

Acceptance is saying, "It is what it is, and what is is what is."

Philosophers from Gertrude Stein ("A rose is a rose is a rose") to Popeye ("I am what I am") have understood acceptance.

"And that's the way it is."

Walter Cronkite

Until we truly accept everything, we cannot see clearly. We will always be looking through the filters of "must's," "should's," "ought-to's," "have-to's," and prejudices.

When reality confronts our notion of what reality should be, reality always wins. (Drop something while believing gravity shouldn't make it fall. It falls anyway.) We don't like this (that is, we have trouble accepting this), so we either struggle with reality and become upset, or turn away from it and become unconscious. If you find yourself upset or unconscious--or alternating between the two--about something, you might ask yourself, "What am I not accepting?"

"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence."

Robert Frost

Acceptance is not a state of passivity or inaction. I am not saying you can't change the world, right wrongs, or replace evil with good. Acceptance is, in fact, the first step to successful action. If you don't fully accept a situation precisely the way it is, you will have difficulty changing it. Moreover, if you don't fully accept the situation, you will never really know if the situation should be changed.

When you accept, you relax; you let go; you become patient. This is an enjoyable (and effective) place for either participation or departure. To stay and struggle (even for fun

things: how many times have you tried really hard to have a good time?), or to run away in disgust and/or fear is not the most fulfilling way to live. One or the other, however, is the inevitable result of non-acceptance.

Take a few moments and consider a situation you are not happy with--not your greatest burden in life, just a simple event about which you feel peeved. Now accept everything about the situation. Let it be the way it is. Because, after all, it is that way, is it not? Also, if you accept it, you will feel better about it.

After accepting it, and everything about it, you probably still won't like it, but you may stop hating and/or fearing it. At least you will hate it or fear it a little less.

That's the true value of acceptance: you feel better about life, and about yourself. Everything I've said about acceptance also applies to things you have done (or failed to do). In fact, everything I've said about acceptance applies especially to your judgments of you.

All the things you think you should have done, and all the things you think you shouldn't have done, accept them. You did (or didn't) do them. That's reality. That's what happened. No changing the past. You can struggle with the past or pretend it didn't happen or you can accept it. I suggest the latter.

Even a prime-time disciplinarian such as Paul admitted,

For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. (Romans 7:19)

And that was a man who knew his should's. The next time you find yourself doing something you "shouldn't," or not doing something you "should," you might as well accept it. "If it was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me."

When you make a mistake, admit it. If you don't, you only make matters worse.

WARD CLEAVER

While you're at it, you might as well accept all your future transgressions against the "should's," "must's," and "have-to's." You will transgress. Not that I necessarily endorse transgression--I simply accept the fact that human beings do do such things. Accept your humanity--with all the magnificence and folly inherent in it.

When you're in a state of non-acceptance, it's difficult to learn. A clenched fist cannot receive a gift, and a clenched psyche--grasped tightly against the reality of what must not be accepted--cannot easily receive a lesson.

Relax. Accept what's already taken place--whether done by you or something outside of you. Then look for the lesson. You might not enjoy everything that happens in life, but you can enjoy the fact that no matter what happens, "there's a lesson in here someplace."

And don't forget: It's mostly genetic.