

Accepting Emotions

- When you're feeling an unpleasant emotion, the first step is to take a few slow, deep breaths, and quickly scan your body from head to toe.

SEP • You will probably notice several uncomfortable sensations. Look for the strongest sensation – the one that bothers you the most. For example, it may be a lump in your throat, or a knot in your stomach, or an ache in your chest.

- Focus your attention on that sensation. Observe it curiously, as if you are a friendly scientist, discovering some interesting new phenomenon.

- Observe the sensation carefully. Notice where it starts and where it ends. Learn as much about it as you can. If you had to draw a line around the sensation, what would the outline look like? Is it on the surface of the body, or inside you, or both? How far inside you does it go? Where is the sensation most intense? Where is it weakest? How is it different in the center than around the edges? Is there any pulsation, or vibration within it? Is it light or heavy? Moving or still? What is its temperature?

- Take a few more deep breaths, and let go of the struggle with that sensation. Breathe into it. Imagine your breath flowing in and around it.

- Make room for it. Loosen up around it. Allow it to be there. You don't have to like it or want it. Simply let it be.

- The idea is to observe the sensation – not to think about it. So when your mind starts commenting on what's happening, just say 'Thanks, mind!' and come back to observing. • You may find this difficult. You may feel a strong urge to fight with it or push it away. If so, just acknowledge this urge, without giving in to it. (Acknowledging is rather like nodding your head in recognition, as if to say 'There you are. I see you.')
- Once you've acknowledged that urge, bring your attention back to the sensation itself.

- Don't try to get rid of the sensation or alter it. If it changes by itself, that's okay. If it doesn't change, that's okay too. Changing or getting rid of it is not the goal.

- You may need to focus on this sensation for anything from a few seconds to a few minutes, until you completely give up the struggle with it. Be patient. Take as long as you need. You're learning a valuable skill.
- Once you've done this, scan your body again, and see if there's another strong sensation that's bothering you. If so, repeat the procedure with that one.
- You can do this with as many different sensations as you want to. Keep going until you have a sense of no longer struggling with your feelings.
- As you do this exercise one of two things will happen: either your feelings will change - or they won't. It doesn't matter either way. This exercise is not about changing your feelings. It's about accepting them.

Quick Steps To Emotional Acceptance

1. **OBSERVE.** Bring awareness to the feelings in your body.
2. **BREATHE.** Take a few deep breaths. Breathe into and around them.
3. **EXPAND.** Make room for these feelings. Create some space for them.
4. **ALLOW.** Allow them to be there. Make peace with them

Some people find it helpful to silently say to themselves, *'I don't like this feeling, but I have room for it,'* or *'It's unpleasant, but I can accept it.'*