

Sometimes in life, we end up in situations that we can't change. These situations can have an impact on our mental health, and some individuals may turn to alcohol and/or drugs to cope with situations or stress they are having trouble handling. According to Mental Health America, radical acceptance can help. Radical acceptance is fully accepting your reality in situations that are beyond your control. This doesn't mean you approve of the situation, are giving up, or that it isn't painful. You should feel however you feel, but by accepting that it is what it is, you give the problem less power over you and you can begin to move forward.

Fast Facts

- Practicing radical acceptance has been shown to reduce feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety.
- Radical acceptance can reduce distress in dealing with negative thoughts or events.

Tips For Success

Notice when you're fighting against reality. The first step in accepting reality is gaining awareness that you're resisting it. If you're feeling bitter or resentful, wishing things were different or thinking about how life isn't fair, you might be fighting reality.

Remind yourself that you can't change what has already happened. By identifying what you can and can't control, you can turn your energy towards coping with the things you can't change.

Embrace your feelings. You might still be angry, scared, overwhelmed, or lonely – that's okay. Accepting reality includes everything that you're feeling, too. When you let yourself experience feelings you can work through them in a healthy way.

Pretend that you're accepting reality. Think about what it would look like if you accepted reality. How would you act if you simply accepted things as they are? Changing your behaviors and actions to reflect "pretend acceptance" can help you to actually shift your thoughts.

Use coping statements. These are sentences that remind you that different, healthier ways of thinking are possible. Repeating them can help you get through difficult moments. Some examples are:

- *It is what it is.*
- *I can't change what has already happened.*
- *I can accept things the way they are.*
- *I can only control my own actions and reactions.*

It may help to write your coping statements on Post-It notes and put them in places where you will see them multiple times a day.

Know that it takes practice. Start by trying radical acceptance out in smaller situations, like when you're stuck in traffic. By practicing daily, it will be easier to use as a coping tool when bigger, tougher challenges come your way.

Give yourself grace. Instead of asking yourself “why am I thinking like this?!” , think about how impressive it is that you keep going, despite what you have faced.

Ask for help. It's easy to compare how you're feeling to how you assume others are feeling, and it may seem like everyone else is doing just fine. How they cope doesn't matter. If you need (or want) professional help, it's important to get it as soon as you can.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.