



HOW TO EMBRACE SELF-ACCEPTANCE



*Making peace with who you are
while still making room to grow*

-  Understand yourself
-  Quiet your inner critic
-  Heal old patterns
-  Build self-compassion
-  Strengthen self-worth
-  Create a kinder mindset
-  Embrace who you are


**You don't have to
have it all figured out.**

You just have to be
willing to be kind to you.



Delyth Cole
Registered Therapist
Best Self Therapy



*You are
allowed to
be both a
work in
progress
and enough
right now*



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Welcome ...

Think About This - Maybe You Don't Need Fixing

Self-acceptance can sound simple: **"Just love yourself."**

But if you've spent years feeling **not good enough, too much, not enough, different, behind, awkward or somehow wrong**, it probably isn't that easy.

And there may be good reasons you learned to feel this way.

- Perhaps you experienced criticism.
- Comparison.
- Rejection.
- Pressure to achieve.
- Relationships that knocked your confidence.

... Or maybe you simply learned that certain versions of you were more acceptable than others. Over time, those experiences can become part of the way you see yourself.

What Is Self-Acceptance?

Self-acceptance isn't believing: "Everything about me is amazing."

It's being able to say: **"This is me. I have strengths, struggles, mistakes, needs and things I'm still working on — and I don't have to hate myself for any of them."**

- ☆ You can accept yourself **and still grow**.
- ☆ You can take responsibility **without attacking yourself**.
- ☆ You can want things to change **without making your worth dependent on changing them**.

Think of Yourself as a House

Maybe there are rooms you love.
Some need decorating.
Some are messy.
A few have boxes you haven't opened in years.



Self-acceptance isn't pretending every room is perfect.

It's deciding you don't need to demolish the whole house because some parts need attention.

Throughout this booklet, we'll gently explore how you came to see yourself the way you do — and whether some of those old beliefs still deserve a place in your life.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Finish this sentence without overthinking it:

If I accepted myself a little more, I think I would...

And one thing I wish I could stop giving myself such a hard time about is:

You don't need to become a different person before you're allowed to be on your own side.

For now, we're simply going to get curious about the person who's already here.

How Did I Learn to See Myself This Way?

Your relationship with yourself didn't develop in a vacuum

Nobody is born thinking:

- **"I'm not good enough."**
- **"I need everyone to like me."**
- **"I must get everything right."**
- **"There's something wrong with me."**

Somewhere along the way, we start learning things about **who we are** and **who we think we need to be**.



Your Brain Has Been Taking Notes

Growing up, your brain was constantly collecting information.

From: **Family • School • Friendships • Relationships • Social media • Culture • Praise • Criticism • Rejection • Expectations**

Sometimes the messages were obvious: **"Why can't you be more like...?"**
Sometimes they were much quieter.

Perhaps you noticed you received more approval when you were:
Helpful. Successful. Quiet. Easy-going. Thin. Funny. Strong. Achieving.

Your brain may have concluded:

"This is who I need to be to be accepted."

Imagine Carrying an Old Backpack

Throughout life, people and experiences can quietly put beliefs into your backpack.



- **“Don’t disappoint people.”**
- **“You should be doing better.”**
- **“Don’t make mistakes.”**
- **“Keep everyone happy.”**

After carrying them for years, they can start to feel like your own beliefs.

But occasionally, it’s worth opening the backpack and asking:
“Do I actually want to keep carrying this?”

Understanding Isn’t Blaming

Looking at where your beliefs came from isn’t about finding somebody to blame.

It’s about understanding:

“Ah. There’s a reason I learned this.”

And then asking:

“Does it still fit the person I am today?”



A LITTLE CURIOSITY

Growing up, I learned that I should be:

I felt most accepted when I:

One message about myself I may still carry is:

Do I still believe this?



TAKEAWAY

Some of the things you believe about yourself may have started as **adaptations to the world around you.**

They helped you understand how to belong, cope or protect yourself.

But growing up gives you an opportunity to look again.

You inherited some of the rules.

You get to decide which ones you keep.

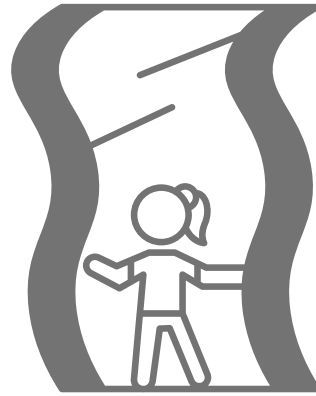
The Wonky Mirror

What if the way you see yourself isn't the whole picture?

Imagine looking into a funhouse mirror.
Your reflection is stretched and distorted.

If you didn't know the mirror was wonky,
you might assume:
"That must be what I actually look like."

Our self-image can work in a similar way.



We Learn Our Reflection From Other People

How we see ourselves is influenced by our experiences.

If you were frequently criticised, excluded, compared or misunderstood,
your internal mirror may have learned to focus on:

- **What's wrong with me?**
- **What do other people have that I don't?**
- **Why can't I be better?**
- **What do I need to change so people accept me?**

After a while, these thoughts can feel less like opinions...
and more like **facts about who you are.**

Your Brain Looks for Evidence

Once we believe something about ourselves, our brains naturally notice information that fits.

If you believe: **"I'm awkward."**

... You'll remember the conversation where you stumbled over your words... and conveniently forget the ten conversations that were absolutely fine.

If you believe: **"I'm not good enough."**

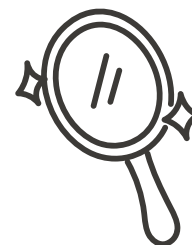
Success might become: **"I was lucky."**

while one mistake becomes: **"See? I knew it."**

The mirror keeps confirming itself.

Try Cleaning the Mirror

Self-acceptance isn't replacing: **"I'm terrible."**
with: **"I'm absolutely incredible!"**



It's developing a clearer, fairer picture.

Try: **"I can be awkward sometimes AND connect well with people."**

"I have weaknesses AND strengths."

"I've made mistakes AND done things I'm proud of."

"Some people won't understand me AND others will."

Both sides belong in the reflection



MIRROR CHECK

Something negative I tend to believe about myself:

What experiences may have helped create that belief?

What evidence seems to support it?

What evidence does my wonky mirror tend to leave out?



TAKEAWAY

You don't need to smash the mirror.
Just start noticing where it might be distorted.

The way you've learned to see yourself isn't necessarily the whole of who you are.

Sometimes self-acceptance begins by stepping back from the reflection and asking:

"Is this really me — or is this how I've learned to see me?"

Meet Your Inner Critic

That voice in your head probably thinks it's helping

You know the voice.

- **"You should have done better."**
- **"Why did you say that?"**
- **"Everyone else seems to manage."**
- **"You're going to embarrass yourself."**
- **"You're not good enough yet."**

We often treat our inner critic like an enemy we need to get rid of.

But what if we got curious about it instead?



Where Does the Critic Come From?

Self-criticism can develop for lots of reasons.

Perhaps criticism once helped you:

- **Avoid mistakes.**
- **Fit in.**
- **Stay out of trouble.**
- **Gain approval.**
- **Push yourself to achieve.**
- **Protect yourself from rejection.**

Your brain may have learned: **"If I criticise myself first, maybe other people won't get the chance."**

Or: **"If I keep pushing myself, maybe I'll finally be good enough."**

There's usually a reason the critic developed.

That doesn't mean you have to keep letting it run the show.

Imagine an Over-Enthusiastic Personal Trainer

Your inner critic thinks motivation sounds like:

"FASTER! BETTER! NOT GOOD ENOUGH! AGAIN!"

It may genuinely believe that if it stops shouting, you'll become lazy, fail or be rejected.

But most people don't thrive when somebody follows them around criticising everything they do.

Neither do you.

Get Curious, Not Cruel

Next time your critic appears, try asking:

- **What is it saying?**
- **What is it frightened would happen if it stopped?**
- **Whose voice does it remind me of?**
- **Is criticism actually helping me here?**

Then ask:

"What would a firm but kind voice say instead?"

Not fake praise.

Not excuses.

Just something fairer.



MEET MY CRITIC

My inner critic often says:

It tends to appear when:

I think it might be trying to protect me from:

A kinder, more useful response would be:



TAKEAWAY

You don't need to hate your inner critic.

It may simply be using an old strategy that once made sense.

You can acknowledge it without handing it the microphone:

"I know you're trying to protect me. But attacking me isn't helping."

Self-acceptance begins when the loudest voice in your head is no longer automatically treated as the wisest one.

Whose Voice Is That Anyway?

Not everything you say to yourself started with you

Sometimes your inner critic sounds so familiar that you assume:

"This is just what I think about myself."

But our internal voice is built over time.

We absorb messages from:

Parents • Teachers • Friends • Partners • School • Work • Social media • Culture • Past experiences

Some were said directly. Others were simply felt.

We Internalise Messages

Maybe you heard:

"You're too sensitive."

"Stop showing off."

"You could do better."

"Don't be difficult."

Or perhaps nobody actually said anything. Maybe you simply learned:

Being successful gets approval. Keeping people happy keeps the peace.... Showing emotion makes people uncomfortable. Making mistakes brings criticism.

So your brain created rules.

"Don't upset anyone." - "Be useful."

"Get it right." - "Don't be too much."

And eventually, somebody else's message can start sounding like your own voice.



Think of an Old Radio Station

Imagine a radio has been playing quietly in the background for years.

After a while, you barely notice it.

Then one day you actually listen:

“Hang on... do I even like this station?”

Your internal messages can be similar.

Just because you’ve heard something repeatedly doesn’t mean you have to keep broadcasting it.



Question the Rule

When you notice a harsh belief, ask:

Who taught me this?

When did I start believing it?

Was it ever useful?

Does it still fit my life now?

What would I rather believe instead?

You don’t need to replace it overnight.

We’re simply questioning whether an old rule still deserves authority.

WHOSE VOICE?

An old message I carry:

I think I learned it from:

It taught me that I needed to:

Does this still serve me?

What I'd rather tell myself now:

TAKEAWAY

Some beliefs belong to an **earlier version of your life.**

You may have needed them once. You may have believed them because you were young, vulnerable, trying to belong or simply didn't have another perspective. Understanding where a voice came from doesn't mean blaming someone forever.

It means recognising:

"I learned this. And learned things can be questioned."

You don't have to keep every message you've ever been given.

You get a say in the voice you carry forward.

Your Brain Has Rules About You

The quiet beliefs underneath the everyday thoughts

Sometimes the thought you notice is: **"I messed that up."**

But underneath it might be something deeper:

"I have to get things right to be good enough."

CBT calls these deeper ideas **core beliefs** and **assumptions**. They're the rules your brain has gradually developed about.... **you, other people and the world.**

Where Do These Rules Come From?

They often develop from our experiences.

- If you were criticised for mistakes, you might learn:
"I must be perfect."
- If you experienced rejection:
"I need people to like me."
- If your feelings weren't taken seriously:
"I'm too sensitive."
- If achievement brought praise:
"My worth comes from what I achieve."

These beliefs can make sense when you understand where they came from.... But that doesn't mean they're **facts**.

Think of Them Like Tinted Glasses

Imagine wearing glasses with slightly tinted lenses for years. Eventually, you forget you're wearing them.



If your underlying belief is: **"I'm not good enough,"**
your brain may interpret everyday experiences through that lens.
A compliment? - **"They're just being nice."**
A mistake? - **"Proof."**
Someone doesn't reply? - **"I've done something wrong."**

The belief filters the evidence — then uses that evidence to strengthen itself.

Find the Rule Underneath

Listen for words like:

MUST • SHOULD • ALWAYS • NEVER • HAVE TO

Try asking:

"If this thought were true, what would it say about me?"

You might discover:

"I must keep everyone happy."

"I shouldn't need help."

"If someone rejects me, I'm not enough."

"If I fail, I am a failure."

Now you have something you can question.

MY HIDDEN RULE

A situation that really affects me:

The thought I usually have:

The deeper rule might be:
"I have to..."

Where might I have learned this?

A fairer rule for me now could be:

TAKEAWAY

Your brain created rules to help you **understand, belong, achieve or protect yourself.**

Some may still be useful.

Others may be old rules for a life you're no longer living.

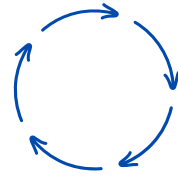
Self-acceptance gives you permission to ask:

"Is this actually true — or have I just lived by it for a very long time?"

You don't have to throw out the whole rulebook today.
Just start noticing who's been writing it.

The Self-Criticism Cycle

Why being hard on yourself can become a loop



Self-criticism often feels like it should motivate us.

"If I give myself a hard enough time, I'll do better next time."

But often, something very different happens.



How the Cycle Works - Imagine you make a mistake at work.

SOMETHING HAPPENS - "I forgot to send an email."



YOUR INNER CRITIC - "I'm so useless. I always mess things up."



YOU FEEL - Embarrassed • Anxious • Ashamed • Deflated



YOU RESPOND - Overthink • Avoid • Over-apologise • Work harder •
Seek reassurance • Withdraw



THE BELIEF GETS STRONGER "See? I really can't cope."

And around we go.



Notice What Happened

The original problem was: **An email wasn't sent.**

That's something you can deal with.

But the brain turned: **"I forgot something."**

into: **"There is something wrong with me."**

Now you're dealing with the email and feeling terrible about yourself.

Think of Self-Criticism Like Digging a Hole

You make a mistake.
You're already in a small hole.



Then the critic arrives with a shovel:

"Typical."

Dig.

"Everyone else manages."

Dig.

"You're such an idiot."

Dig.



Eventually, the mistake isn't even the biggest problem anymore. You're trying to climb out of everything you said to yourself afterwards.

Interrupt the Cycle

Self-acceptance doesn't mean:

"Never mind! I did nothing wrong!"

It sounds more like:

"Okay. I made a mistake. What needs to happen next?"

Notice the difference.

One attacks your identity.

The other addresses the problem.



SPOT MY CYCLE

What happened?

What did I say to myself?

How did that make me feel?

What did I do next?

What would have been more helpful?



TAKEAWAY

You can hold yourself accountable without putting yourself on trial.

Try changing: **“What’s wrong with me?”**

to: **“What happened — and what do I need to do now?”**

You don’t have to become less responsible to become more self-accepting.

You can correct the mistake without attacking the person who made it. And that person is you.

Your Thinking Isn't Always an Honest Narrator

When the way you think about yourself becomes a thinking trap.

Your brain is constantly interpreting what happens. And when you already feel unsure about yourself, those interpretations can become a little... biased.

In CBT, these common patterns are called **cognitive distortions**.

That sounds technical, but it basically means:

Your brain has taken one piece of information and told a much bigger story about it.

And these patterns have names because lots of people experience them.

Which Ones Sound Familiar?

All-or-Nothing Thinking

"If I'm not good at it, I'm terrible at it."

There's no middle ground.

Labelling

You don't make a mistake.

You become: "Stupid." "Lazy." "Useless." "A failure."

A behaviour becomes your whole identity.

Mental Filtering

Ten things went well. One didn't.

Guess which one your brain wants to discuss for the next three hours?

Discounting the Positive

Someone compliments you: **"They're just being nice."**

You achieve something: **"Anyone could have done that."**

Positive evidence gets quietly deleted.

Mind Reading

"They think I'm boring." - "They're judging me."

Your brain has apparently gained access to everybody else's thoughts.

Should Thinking

"I should be further ahead." - "I shouldn't feel like this."

"I should be more confident."

A lot of invisible rules — and usually very little compassion.



CATCH YOUR FAVOURITE

Which ones does your brain use most?

- ☐ All-or-nothing
- ☐ Labelling
- ☐ Mental filtering
- ☐ Discounting positives
- ☐ Mind reading
- ☐ Should thinking

A thought I often have:

Which thinking pattern might be involved?

What information might my brain be leaving out?



Name It — Don't Shame It

Instead of: **"Why do I always think like this?"**

try: **"Ah. There's some all-or-nothing thinking."**

Or: **"I've just labelled my entire personality because of one mistake."**

Naming the pattern creates a little distance from it.
And distance gives you room to get curious.

💛 TAKEAWAY

These thinking patterns aren't evidence that you're bad at thinking.

They're common human shortcuts.

They often become louder when we're stressed, anxious, hurt or already feeling vulnerable.

So don't use cognitive distortions as another reason to criticise yourself.

The aim isn't: **"I shouldn't think like this."**

It's: **"I've noticed what my brain is doing. Is there another way of looking at this?"**

Because a thought can feel completely convincing...
and still not tell the whole story.



Talk to Yourself Like Someone You Actually Like

Kind doesn't mean letting yourself off the hook.

Sometimes people hear self-compassion and imagine telling themselves:

"Everything I do is wonderful and I never need to change."

Thankfully, no. Self-acceptance isn't about lying to yourself.

It's about learning to speak to yourself in a way that's honest, fair and actually useful.



Imagine Talking to a Friend

Your friend tells you: **"I completely messed up that presentation. I got flustered and forgot what I wanted to say."**

Would you respond:

"Wow. Embarrassing."

Everyone probably thinks you're incompetent."

Probably not. You might say:

"That sounds rough. You were nervous and it didn't go how you wanted. What do you think would help next time?"

Notice what you **didn't** do.

... You didn't pretend the presentation was brilliant.

You acknowledged what happened without attacking the person.

You deserve the same approach

From Critic to Coach

When you notice a harsh thought, try this:

1. NOTICE IT

What am I saying to myself?

"I'm such a failure."

2. NAME WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Remove the character assassination.

"Something didn't go the way I wanted."

3. GET CURIOUS

What was going on for me?

"I was overwhelmed and underprepared."

4. CHECK THE EVIDENCE

Is my harsh conclusion completely true?

"No. One difficult experience doesn't define me."

5. RESPOND LIKE A GOOD COACH

Kind and useful.

"I'm disappointed, but I can learn from this. What would help next time?"

Compassion + Accountability

You can say: **"I shouldn't have reacted like that."**

AND **"I was overwhelmed. I can understand why it happened and handle it differently next time."**

Both can be true.

Understanding yourself isn't the same as excusing everything you do. Often, understanding is what finally makes change possible.

HAVE ANOTHER GO

My critical thought:

What actually happened — just the facts?

What might I be overlooking?

What would I say to someone I cared about?

My fairer response to myself:

TAKEAWAY

You don't need to become your own motivational speaker.

Aim for something simpler:

Talk to yourself like you're someone worth helping.

Because shame asks: **"What's wrong with you?"**

A compassionate voice asks: **"What happened, what do you need, and what can you do next?"**

Your Feelings Need a Seat at the Table

You don't have to fix every feeling the moment it arrives.

When uncomfortable emotions show up, it's tempting to immediately try to get rid of them.

- **"Stop being anxious."**
- **"Don't cry."**
- **"I shouldn't be angry."**
- **"Why am I still upset about this?"**

But emotions aren't necessarily problems to solve. Often, they're information.

Feelings Have a Job

Emotions can tell us something about what we've experienced, what matters to us or what we might need.

- **Sadness** might say: *Something mattered to me.*
- **Anger** might say: *Something felt unfair or crossed a boundary.*
- **Fear** might say: *I don't feel safe or certain.*
- **Shame** might say: *I'm frightened something about me makes me unacceptable.*

That doesn't mean every feeling is giving you a completely accurate interpretation of what's happening.

But it may still deserve to be **heard**.

Think of Feelings Like Dashboard Lights

If a warning light appears in your car, covering it with a sticker doesn't fix what's underneath.

Emotions can be similar.

We can distract, overwork, scroll, people-please, overthink or tell ourselves to "get over it."

... The feeling may disappear temporarily.

But sometimes it keeps returning because something underneath still needs attention.

Instead of Judging, Get Curious

Try moving from: **"I shouldn't feel like this."**

to: **"It makes sense that something in me is feeling this. I wonder what's going on?"**

Then ask:

- **What am I feeling?**
- **What happened before this feeling appeared?**
- **What does this emotion seem to be saying?**
- **What might I need right now?**

Maybe you need reassurance. Rest. Space. A boundary. Connection.... Or perhaps you simply need permission to be disappointed for a while.

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN

Right now I feel:

I notice it in my body here:

This feeling may have appeared because:

If this emotion could speak, it might say:

What I might need is:

TAKEAWAY

Self-acceptance isn't only accepting the polished parts of yourself.

It's making room for the **sad, angry, frightened, confused and vulnerable parts too.**

You don't have to hand every emotion the steering wheel.

But you can give it a seat at the table.

Listen to what it's trying to tell you.

Then let the calmer, grounded part of you decide what happens next.

The Iceberg

What people see isn't always
what's really going on

We're quick to judge ourselves
by our behaviour.

"I'm lazy."

"I'm needy."

"I'm too sensitive."

"I always push people away."



But behaviour is often just the visible part of something much
bigger.



Imagine an Iceberg

Above the water, we might see:

**Avoiding • Snapping • Procrastinating • People-pleasing •
Overthinking • Withdrawing • Perfectionism**

But underneath could be:

**Fear • Shame • Exhaustion • Rejection • Unmet needs •
Insecurity • Past experiences • Wanting to feel safe**

If we only criticise what's happening above the water, we miss
the opportunity to understand what's underneath.

Behaviour Often Makes Sense in Context

Maybe you **people-please** because disagreement once felt unsafe.

Maybe you **procrastinate** because you're terrified of getting something wrong.

Maybe you **withdraw** because rejection hurts less when you leave first.

Maybe you become **defensive** because criticism quickly activates shame.

Maybe you need lots of reassurance because part of you is frightened people will leave.

Understanding this doesn't mean: **"So I never need to change."**
It means: **"Now I understand what I'm actually working with."**

And that's much more useful than simply calling yourself difficult.

Look Underneath

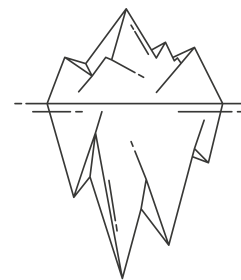
Instead of asking: **"Why am I like this?"**

Try: **"What might be happening underneath this behaviour?"**

Then gently explore:

- **What am I feeling?**
- **What am I afraid of?**
- **What am I trying to protect myself from?**
- **What do I actually need?**

MY ICEBERG



Above the water — something I do:

Underneath — what I might be feeling:

What I might be afraid of:

What I might be trying to protect:

What I may actually need:

TAKEAWAY

Self-acceptance means becoming interested in yourself rather than immediately judging yourself.

Your behaviour may need changing AND it may deserve understanding.

Both things can be true. Because when you understand what's underneath the iceberg, you can start responding to the real need rather than endlessly fighting what's visible on the surface.

Curiosity asks questions that criticism never thinks to ask.

Parent • Adult • Child

Why your internal group chat can get a little chaotic
Sometimes it can feel like there are several different voices in your head.

One is criticising you.

One is panicking.

One wants to hide under a blanket and ignore everything.

And somewhere in there is a calmer voice saying:
"Okay... what do we actually need to do here?"

Transactional Analysis offers a useful way of understanding these different states.

Think of It Like an Internal Group Chat

The Critical Parent

This voice carries rules, expectations and criticism.

"You should know better."

"Stop being so sensitive."

"You need to get your life together."



Sometimes these messages were absorbed from other people long ago.

The Adapted Child

This part learned how to respond to expectations, criticism or rejection.

It might think:

"Please don't be disappointed in me."

"I'll just keep everyone happy."

"I've messed everything up."



It may people-please, withdraw, rebel or panic.

The Grounded Adult

This part looks at what's happening here and now.

It gathers information rather than immediately judging.



"Okay. I'm overwhelmed."

"I made a mistake, but it can be dealt with."

"What actually needs doing today?"

Bring Your Adult Into the Conversation

- Imagine your **Critical Parent** says: ***"You should have your life together by now."***
- Your **Adapted Child** responds: ***"I'm trying! I'm such a failure."***
- Your **grounded Adult** might say: ***"I'm still figuring things out. Comparing myself isn't helping. What's one thing I can realistically focus on today?"***

Same situation. Very different conversation.

CHECK YOUR INTERNAL GROUP CHAT

My Critical Parent tends to say:

My Adapted Child tends to respond:

What might my grounded Adult say instead?

TAKEAWAY

Self-acceptance doesn't mean silencing every uncomfortable voice. It's learning that **not every voice needs to be in charge**. You can notice the criticism. Understand the frightened or younger part underneath it.

Then allow your grounded Adult to respond:

"I hear you. But I'm here now — and I get to decide what happens next."

Stop Moving the Goalposts

"I'll feel good enough when..."

Maybe your brain has a deal with you:

"I'll accept myself when I lose weight."

"...when I'm more confident."

"...when I earn more."

"...when I'm in a relationship."

"...when I stop making mistakes."

"...when I finally get my life together."



The problem?

The goalposts have a habit of moving.



Conditional Self-Worth

Sometimes we learn that our worth depends on meeting certain conditions.

If I achieve → I'm good enough.

If people approve of me → I'm likeable.

If I look a certain way → I'm acceptable.

If I cope well → I'm strong.

So we keep trying to earn something that was **never** supposed to be a prize: **permission to be okay with ourselves.**

Why Doesn't Achievement Fix It?

Because when the deeper belief is: **"I'm not enough,"**
your brain can simply create another target.

You get the job. **"Now I need a promotion."**
You receive praise. **"They're just being nice."**
You reach the goal. **"I should have done it sooner."**

Achievement isn't the problem.
Using achievement as proof that you're worthy is exhausting.

Acceptance AND Ambition

You can want to improve your health.
Build confidence.
Work towards a career.
Change behaviours that aren't helping you.
Learn new things.

And still say:
"I don't have to hate who I am today to work towards who I want to become."

Think of it as renovating the house rather than refusing to live in it until it's perfect.

WHERE ARE MY GOALPOSTS?

I'll finally feel good enough when...

And if I achieved that, would my brain create another condition?

What am I hoping this achievement would prove about me?

Could I begin giving myself some of that now?

TAKEAWAY

Goals can give your life direction.

They don't need to determine your worth.

You are allowed to be a work in progress and still be worthy of respect — including your own.

Self-acceptance isn't the end of growth.

Sometimes it's where healthier growth finally begins.

What Would One Point Better Look Like?

You don't need to change everything at once

When we're unhappy with ourselves, the brain tends to think big:

"I need to be confident."

"I need to stop caring what people think."

"I need to sort my whole life out."

Understandably, that can feel overwhelming.

Solution-focused therapy offers a gentler question:

"What would just one point better look like?"

Imagine a 0-10 Ladder



Think about your self-acceptance right now.

0 = I'm constantly fighting against myself

10 = I feel accepting, comfortable and compassionate towards myself

Where are you today?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

My number: _____

Now comes the interesting bit.

Instead of asking: **"How do I get to 10?"**

ask: **"What would move me up by just ONE point?"**

Small Changes Count

One point better might look like:

- Catching one critical thought.
- Saying no without writing a three-paragraph apology.
- Accepting a compliment instead of arguing with it.
- Wearing something because you like it.
- Taking a break before you've completely exhausted yourself.
- Not comparing yourself online for an evening.
- Speaking to yourself kindly after a mistake.

Small doesn't mean insignificant.

Small is often how change actually happens.

Look for Exceptions Too

Ask yourself: **"When is this already slightly easier?"**

- ★ Maybe you're kinder to yourself around certain people.
- ★ Perhaps you feel more like yourself when you're being creative.
- ★ Maybe there are days when your inner critic is quieter.

These moments matter.

They show you that the problem isn't present 100% of the time.

Something is already working.

MY ONE-POINT PLAN

I'm currently at: ____ / 10

Why am I already here and not one point lower?

What am I already doing that helps?

One point better would look like:

One tiny thing I could try this week:

TAKEAWAY

You don't need a dramatic personality transformation.
You don't need to wake up tomorrow overflowing with self-love.
Look for 1%.

- One kinder thought.
- One healthier boundary.
- One moment of choosing yourself.
- One time you notice the critic and don't automatically believe it.

**You don't have to leap to the top of the ladder.
Just find the next rung.**

You're More Than the Things You Struggle With

Your difficulties are part of your story — not your entire identity

When something has been difficult for a long time, it can start taking up a lot of space in how you describe yourself.

"I'm anxious."

"I'm insecure."

"I'm awkward."

"I'm an overthinker."

Maybe those things genuinely are part of your experience.

But they aren't all of you.



Your Brain Has a Spotlight

Imagine your attention is a spotlight.

When you're struggling with self-worth, that spotlight can become very good at finding:

Mistakes • Flaws • Awkward moments • Things you haven't achieved • Ways you think you don't measure up

Meanwhile, a huge amount of you sits quietly outside the beam.

Positive psychology isn't about pretending the difficult stuff isn't there. It's about widening the spotlight.

What Else Is True About You?

Maybe you're:

**Curious. Loyal. Creative. Funny. Thoughtful. Determined.
Caring. Independent. Brave. Open-minded.**

Perhaps you're someone who:

- keeps going when things are difficult.
- notices when someone else is struggling.
- makes people laugh.
- cares deeply.
- tries again.
- asks for help.
- stands up for things that matter.

These things count too.

Think Beyond “What Am I Good At?”

Strengths aren't only achievements.
They can be qualities you bring to life.
And your values can tell you even more.

Ask: **What kind of person matters to me to be?**

Not what looks impressive. Not what gets the most likes.
Not what everybody else expects.

What actually matters to you?



WIDEN THE SPOTLIGHT



Three qualities I appreciate in myself:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Something difficult I've handled:

Something I bring to other people's lives:

Something that matters deeply to me:



TAKEAWAY

You don't have to turn every weakness into a strength.
You don't have to find a "*positive side*" to every painful experience.

Some things are simply difficult... But difficult things don't get to tell your entire story.

You are your struggles **and** your strengths.

Your mistakes **and** what you've learned.

Your insecurities **and** the things you care deeply about.

Widen that spotlight...

There is more to you than the part you've been criticising.

Comparison

Their highlight reel. Your behind-the-scenes.

Comparison is incredibly human.

Our brains naturally look around and ask:

"How am I doing?"

"Do I fit in?"

"Am I falling behind?"

The problem starts when comparison becomes evidence for:

"Everyone else is doing life better than me."

Social Media Makes This Tricky



You might see someone's:

**New job • Relationship • Holiday • Confidence •
Body • Social life • Success**

What you usually don't see is:

- Their insecurity.
- Their arguments.
- Their bad mornings.
- Their overdraft.
- Their rejection email.
- The 150 photos they didn't post.
-

You're comparing your full reality with a tiny edited window into somebody else's. That's rarely a fair comparison.

Comparison Can Tell You Something

Instead of immediately judging yourself, get curious.

If somebody else's life triggers you, ask:

"What is this bringing up for me?"

- Jealousy might reveal something you **want**.
- Sadness might highlight something you **miss**.
- Insecurity might touch an old belief about **not being enough**.

Comparison doesn't have to become self-criticism.

Sometimes it can become information.

Stay in Your Own Lane

Imagine running a race while constantly looking sideways.



You'd probably trip over eventually.

Other people's lives can give us ideas and inspiration.

But they don't provide the timetable for yours.

Different starting points. Different circumstances. Different priorities. Different lives.

You are not late because somebody else arrived somewhere first.

COMPARISON CHECK

Someone or something I compare myself with:

What do I tell myself when I compare?

What might I be assuming about their life?

What does this comparison tell me I might want or value?

One thing I want to focus on in my lane:

TAKEAWAY

You don't have to pretend you never compare yourself.
Just notice when comparison stops being useful and starts becoming a weapon against you.

Try moving from: **"Why aren't I more like them?"**
to: **"What do I want my life to look and feel like?"**

Because **self-acceptance becomes much easier when you're building a life around your values**, rather than constantly checking whether you're keeping up with somebody else's.

Acceptance AND Change

You can accept yourself and still want things to be different
Sometimes self-acceptance gets misunderstood as ...

- **"This is just who I am."**
- **"I shouldn't have to change anything."**
- **"I have to love every part of myself."**

But accepting yourself doesn't mean giving every behaviour a lifetime membership.

Acceptance and change can exist together.

Acceptance Says...

"This is where I am right now."

"There are reasons I developed these patterns."

"Struggling doesn't make me a bad person."

"I can understand myself without shaming myself."

And **change** says:

"Some things aren't working for me anymore."

"I want to respond differently."

"I can learn."

"I can make different choices."

You don't have to choose one or the other.



Think Renovation, Not Demolition

Imagine buying a house that needs some work. You wouldn't necessarily knock the entire building down because one room needed redecorating.



Maybe you repair something.
Remove something that no longer works.
Strengthen a few foundations.
Open some windows.

Growth can be renovation rather than demolition.

You don't need to destroy who you are in order to become healthier.



Responsibility Without Shame

Maybe you've:

- hurt someone.
- avoided difficult conversations.
- people-pleased until you became resentful.
- stayed somewhere longer than was good for you.
- reacted from fear.
- made choices you wouldn't make now.

Self-acceptance doesn't require pretending those things didn't happen. It allows you to say: **"I can understand why I did that AND take responsibility for doing something differently now."**

That's growth. Not punishment.

ACCEPT OR CHANGE?

Something about myself I want to practise accepting:

Something I'd genuinely like to change:

Why would this change matter to me?

One compassionate step I could take:

TRY THIS QUESTION

Instead of: **"How do I become a better person?"**

try: **"Knowing what I know now, how would I like to treat myself — and other people — differently?"**

TAKEAWAY

You are allowed to be unfinished.

You can have regrets and still respect yourself.

You can have patterns you want to change and still understand why they developed.

You don't have to hate the current version of yourself to create the next one.

Sometimes the safest place to grow from is simply:

"This is where I am. And I'm willing to work with myself from here."

My Self-Acceptance Toolkit

What helps me come back to myself?

Self-acceptance isn't something you achieve once and then permanently tick off the list.

Some days you'll feel grounded.

Other days, an awkward conversation, criticism, comparison or one photo taken from a truly criminal angle can wake the inner critic straight back up.

So these page are your **personal toolkit** for those moments.



When I Start Being Hard on Myself...

My common triggers are:

My inner critic usually says:

The old belief underneath might be:

What Helps Me Come Back to Myself?

A fairer response I can practise:

What might I be feeling underneath?

What do I actually need?

- ☐ Rest
- ☐ Reassurance
- ☐ Space
- ☐ Connection
- ☐ A boundary
- ☐ Perspective
- ☐ Something else: _____

Remember Who You Are

Three strengths I want to remember:

1.

2.

3.

People I feel most myself around:

Things that help me feel grounded and like me:



MY RESET QUESTION



When I notice myself disappearing down the
“there’s something wrong with me” rabbit hole,

I want to ask:

“What would help me be on my own side right now?”

My answer might be:



KEEP THIS SOMEWHERE HANDY

You won’t always remember every technique when you’re struggling.

You don’t need to.

Come back to four simple steps:

**NOTICE → GET CURIOUS → RESPOND KINDLY
→ CHOOSE WHAT HELPS**

Self-acceptance isn’t never doubting yourself again.

It’s learning how to find your way back when you do.

A Letter to the Person You're Becoming

You don't need to become a completely different person.

Maybe you started this booklet thinking self-acceptance meant reaching a place where you love absolutely everything about yourself.



It doesn't.

- Some parts of you are still growing.
- Some behaviours you may want to change.
- Some insecurities might still show up.
- And some things you've spent years trying to "fix" may not actually need fixing at all.

Look at What You're Learning

Perhaps you're beginning to recognise:

"There are reasons I became hard on myself."

"Not every thought I have about myself is a fact."

"My emotions aren't something to be ashamed of."

"I can take responsibility without attacking myself."

"I don't have to earn my worth through perfection."

That's self-acceptance too. Not a dramatic transformation.

A different relationship with yourself.

Write to Your Future Self

Imagine yourself six months from now.
Not perfect. Not completely healed.



Just a little more comfortable being you.
What would you like that version of you to remember?

Dear me,



I hope you're learning that...

I hope you've stopped giving yourself such a hard time
about...

When your inner critic gets loud, please remember...

I'm proud of you for...

One thing I hope you keep choosing for yourself is...

*With a little more kindness,
Me ♡ xx*

A THOUGHT

There may always be things you're working on.
That's part of being human.

But growth doesn't have to begin with:
"I'm not good enough like this."

It can begin with:

"I'm worth understanding."

"I'm allowed to take up space while I'm still figuring things out."

"I can be on my own side while I grow."

Maybe you don't need to become a completely different person.

Maybe you just need to build a different relationship with the person who's already here.

You're Allowed to Be on Your Own Side

A final note before you go

If you've spent years criticising yourself, comparing yourself or believing you need to change before you're good enough, self-acceptance probably won't happen because you completed one booklet.

And that's okay.

This isn't another thing you need to get right.

The aim is simply to begin noticing when you're fighting against yourself — and practise responding differently.

Maybe Self-Acceptance Sounds Like...

- "There are reasons I feel this way."
- "A difficult thought isn't automatically the truth."
- "I can make mistakes without becoming a mistake."
- "My feelings are allowed to exist."
- "I can have boundaries even if someone doesn't like them."
- "I don't have to compare my timeline with everyone else's."
- "I can change without hating who I am now."

Some days you'll believe these more than others.

Keep practising anyway.



If You're Still Struggling

Sometimes understanding why we feel the way we do isn't enough to change it on our own.

You might benefit from therapeutic support if self-criticism, low self-worth, anxiety, shame, perfectionism or difficult past experiences are having a significant impact on your life.

Therapy gives you space to explore your story.

Not just: **"How do I stop feeling like this?"**

but: **"Where did this come from — and what do I need now?"**

TAKE THIS WITH YOU

- You don't have to love every part of yourself every day.
- You don't have to feel confident all the time.
- You don't have to have everything figured out.

Perhaps, for now, self-acceptance can simply mean:

"I'm learning to stop treating myself like the enemy."

And that's a pretty meaningful place to begin.

A Few Things To Know:

This guide has been written as an educational reference resource.

It's designed to increase understanding, encourage reflection and support meaningful conversations.

Although it draws on my therapeutic knowledge and experience, it is not a substitute for therapy, medical advice or crisis support.

If you are experiencing significant distress or concerns about your safety or the safety of someone else, please seek support from an appropriate healthcare professional or emergency service in your area.

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