ACCEPTANCE

We all have a general sense of what it means to “accept” something. There are many aspects of life that we could simply “accept”, financial circumstances, unhealthy relationships, unfulfilling jobs, etc. However, in psychology, acceptance means taking a stance of non-judgmental awareness and actively embracing the experience of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations as they occur.

One of the key ideas underlying acceptance, is that difficult emotions are an inescapable part of life, at different times we will find ourselves sad, angry, disappointed, bored, frustrated, grieving, heartbroken, etc. No one, even the most even-keeled individual, is free of these emotions. When these emotions inevitably do arise, there are two ways that we can react, resistance or acceptance. For many of us, resistance is our default reaction. After all, these emotions are not necessarily “pleasant” to experience. But Psychologists have found that trying to resist or avoid certain difficult experiences can cause further Psychological harm (Hayes et al., 2006).

Why Acceptance Is Important: Experts suggest that acceptance is the healthier option. For example, believing that something is wrong with us is a deep and tenacious suffering. Your experience of yourself consists largely of your emotions, thoughts, and actions, and so learning to accept these (even when they seem difficult or undesirable) is a helpful tool for well-being.

To be more accepting, it can be helpful to reflect on your habitual attitude towards yourself.

Ask yourself:

* Do you ever speak harshly to yourself about a perceived mistake you made or an embarrassing thing you said?
* Are you ever feeling overwhelmed with emotion, and on top of everything, frustrated with yourself for feeling this way?
* How might you be able to take a more understanding and gentle attitude towards yourself?