

Radical Acceptance Script

Written for DBT therapists reading aloud with a client who has agreed to try acceptance and keeps sliding back into arguing with the fact. Nine minutes that separates accepting from approving inside the body of the script rather than leaving it as a note afterwards — because the second a client hears radical acceptance as consent to what happened, the practice is over and they are right to refuse it.

9 min · 6 segments

01. Choosing the fact

1 min 15

[Have the client name the fact out loud before you start reading, and hold them to that one fact for the whole nine minutes. A client allowed to swap it mid-script will land somewhere easier every time.]

Before we begin, bring one thing to mind. Something that has already happened, or is happening now, that you cannot change. Not the hardest thing you carry. Something real that you keep arguing with. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

Hold that one thing for all of this. If your mind offers you a different one halfway through, notice the offer and stay where you are. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Sit in a way you could hold for ten minutes. Let your hands rest open on your knees, palms upward if that is available to you. Eyes closed, or lowered to the floor. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

02. Naming it plainly

1 min 30

[Give the full thirty seconds after the second paragraph. Stripping the argument out of the sentence is slow work and clients often need two or three attempts before the sentence is only fact.]

Say the fact to yourself in the plainest words you have. Not the story around it. Not what it means about you, or about anyone else. Just what happened, or what is true. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

Now notice how much of what you just said was the fact, and how much was the argument with it. Should not have. Unfair. How could they. If only. Those belong to the argument. Take them out and say it again with them gone. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

That is the fact. It is already the case. It was the case before you came in here and it will be the case when you leave. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

03. Accepting is not approving

1 min 45

[This is the segment the whole script exists for. Slow down, and look at the client's face at the end of it. If they look as though something is being taken from them, stop and read the first paragraph again before you move on — that expression means they have heard consent, and going forward from there teaches the wrong skill.]

Here is the part that gets missed. Accepting this does not mean you approve of it. It does not mean it was acceptable, or deserved, or fair, or in any way all right. It does not mean you forgive anybody. It does not mean you would choose it, and it does not mean you have to stop wishing it had gone differently. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

Accepting means one thing only. It happened. It is real. Refusing the fact of it does not undo it. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

You can hold both of those. This should not have happened. And this happened. Say them one after the other, in that order, and see whether your body will let them both stand. *[pause for 40 seconds]*

04. What the fighting costs

1 min 30

[Do not soften the third paragraph or hurry past it. Clients need to hear that the first pain is not being taken away from them, or acceptance sounds like being asked to mind less than they do.]

Notice what happens in your body when you argue with it. There is a tightening somewhere. A pulling away. That is effort, and it has been running underneath everything else you do, most of the time, for a long while. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

The pain of the thing itself is one pain. The fighting is a second one, sitting on top, and it is the one with no end, because that fight cannot be won. The fact does not move. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

You are not being asked to stop hurting. The first pain stays. We are only looking at the second one. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

05. Turning the mind

1 min 30

[Expect the client's face to change several times through this segment — that is the turning happening, not a lapse. Say the third paragraph as a plain statement of how the skill works, never as encouragement.]

Acceptance is not a decision you make once and then own. It is a turn you make, and then make again, because the mind goes back. Every time you notice you have gone back to arguing, that noticing is the moment. You turn again. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Do it now. Notice where your mind actually is. If it has gone to the argument, bring it back to the plain fact and let it rest there. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

You may have to do that several times in the next minute. That is not failing at it. That is the practice. It is the turning, not the staying. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

06. What it frees

1 min 30

[Add nothing after the final line. The question in the second paragraph is the deliverable — if the client answers it aloud, write their words down exactly as they say them and open with those words next session.]

Let your hands stay open, palms upward. Unclench your jaw. Let your shoulders down by whatever amount they will go. The body sometimes agrees to a thing before the mind does, and it is allowed to go first. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Now ask yourself one question, and do not rush the answer. Given that this is true — and it is true — what is the next thing I do? *[pause for 30 seconds]*

That is what acceptance is for. Not peace with what happened. The freedom to act on the situation you are actually in, instead of the one you keep insisting on. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Take one full breath. Let your eyes open. Bring the answer out with you.

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