

Thoughts and Feelings: Struggle or Acceptance?

The goal of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is to help clients accept what lies beyond their control and commit to life-enhancing actions instead.

This particularly applies to the relationship that we have with our feelings.

This relationship can be characterized by **struggle** and/or **acceptance**:

- **Struggling** with thoughts and feelings involves attempting to judge, avoid, or distract ourselves from them.
- **Accepting** them entails creating space for and accepting our emotions and thoughts.

Thoughts and Feelings: Struggle or Acceptance helps you gain more insight into how much control you believe you have over your feelings and thoughts.

Completing this exercise can highlight helpful ways that you might work on cultivating more acceptance of your feelings and thoughts for a more well-balanced relationship with your emotions.

Instructions

For each statement pair, check the answer that most closely describes your feelings.

If you are unsure which to choose, check the statement that best describes your attitude most of the time.

1	I need to control my emotions to achieve things and be successful.	I can be successful without controlling my feelings.
2	Anxiety is a bad thing.	Anxiety is neither good nor bad; it's an uncomfortable feeling that comes and goes.
3	Being unable to eliminate or squash a negative feeling is a personal flaw or weakness.	Needing to eliminate or regulate negative feelings is a problem.
4	Experiencing negative emotions and thoughts is a sign of psychological problems.	Experiencing negative emotions and thoughts is a normal part of life.
5	I make a concerted effort to suppress unwanted thoughts and emotions.	I allow emotions and thoughts to come and go without trying to suppress them.
6	I need to feel positive before tackling an important and challenging task.	I am able to tackle important and challenging tasks despite having sad or anxious emotions.

7	I must control or eliminate negative emotions and thoughts, or else they will harm me.	Even though they feel bad, negative emotions and thoughts can't hurt you.
8	Anxiety is not alright, so I strive to avoid feeling it.	Nobody enjoys feeling anxious, but it's alright to experience it.
9	I aim to eliminate negative thoughts and feelings as fast as I can when they pop up.	I allow negative feelings and thoughts to come and go, realizing that they will do so naturally.
10	Being able to control my feelings means I can control my life.	I can control my life without needing to control my feelings.
11	Negative emotions and thoughts are symptoms of problems in my life.	Negative emotions and thoughts are a natural part of life; they do not indicate problems.
12	I must be completely sure before I can do anything important.	I can do important things even when I still feel some doubt.
13	Analyzing negative emotions and thoughts is the best way to understand and get rid of them.	Acknowledging negative emotions and thoughts without judgment or analysis is a reasonable way to manage them.
14	If I get better at avoiding and eliminating negative thoughts and emotions, I'll have a better life.	I can have a good life by letting negative thoughts and emotions come and go naturally, while striving to live in harmony with them.
15	Some of my stronger emotions scare me.	I am not fearful of my emotions, regardless of how strong they are.
	Total	Total

Calculate your score by summing up your checkmarks in the left and right columns.

This questionnaire is adapted from the *Control of Thoughts and Feelings Questionnaire* (Harris, 2008) and similar measures by Steven Hayes, Frank Bond, and others.

Sources

- Harris, R. (2008). *The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living: A Guide to ACT*. MA: Trumpeter Books.