



Self-Acceptance Meditation

 Self-acceptance

 Meditation

 20 min

 Client

 No

Self-acceptance refers to the relationship that an individual has with him/herself and is conceptualized as the acceptance of self despite weaknesses or deficiencies. Some scholars have added the term “unconditional” to the concept of self-acceptance to stress the fact that self-acceptance is not based on self-evaluation against some standard but a relational stance in which the individual accepts him/herself at a very fundamental level (Ellis, 1977), regardless of whether certain expectations are met. Unconditional self-acceptance means that “the individual fully and unconditionally accepts himself whether or not he behaves intelligently, correctly, or competently and whether or not other people approve, respect, or love him” (Ellis, 1977, p. 101). A person with a high level of self-acceptance does not feel “less” compared to others because of his/her weaknesses and failures and does not feel “better” than others because of his/her strengths and successes. Self-acceptance is the hallmark of a healthy relationship with the self.



Author

This meditation was created by Hugo Alberts (Ph.D.).



Goal

The goal of this tool is for clients to familiarize themselves with self-acceptance, reflect on the self's inability to accept the self unconditionally, and set an intention to become more self-accepting.



Advice

- Clients should practice this meditation during the session first before trying it at home on their own. This would allow the practitioner to examine the effects of the meditation on the client and the client's experiences with it.
- Inform clients that it is quite common for emotions to arise during this meditation. Clients should be encouraged to allow emotions to be present, rather than pushing them away or avoiding them. If clients report that the meditation has become overwhelming, stop the exercise, and encourage discussions around what triggered the strong emotions.



References

- Ellis, A. (1977). Psychotherapy and the value of a human being. *Handbook of rational-emotive therapy*, 1, 99-112.



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Instructions

Meditation script

This meditation is about self-acceptance. Self-acceptance means accepting ourselves for who we are at this very moment. It means relating to ourselves the same way we would relate to someone for whom we love and care deeply. When we accept ourselves, we permit ourselves to be human; to fail, to make mistakes, and to learn and grow. We accept our weaknesses instead of feeling somehow less because of them. Likewise, we accept our strengths but do not feel superior because of them. Self-acceptance means that you allow yourself to be as you are.

I would like to ask you to close your eyes if you haven't done so already. Now try to focus your attention on your breath. Just notice how you breathe in and breathe out. Allow yourself to do just that; breathe in and breathe out. There is nothing you need to achieve or become. In this meditation, you cannot fail or succeed. Just see how it goes. Simply breathe in and breathe out. Feel how the air flows through your nose, how your chest expands when you breathe in, and how the air moves out when you exhale. Follow the breath like this for a few moments.

Self-acceptance, as the term suggests, is about the self. But who is this self? Who are you? Let's go and explore how you self-developed. For this, I would like to ask you to go back with me in time. Imagine the moment you were born. The moment you came to this planet as a baby. You had no idea about right or wrong, no idea about anything. You just were. You were looking at this world with brand new eyes. Try to visualize yourself as a baby as vividly as possible.

Now imagine that someone would tell you, this baby, that you are not good enough yet. That you need to find a good job later in life... that you need to make enough money or become successful to be enough... that you would be worthy of love only if you were to become successful in the future. That you are not enough the way you are now...that something needs to be "added" to you, to this baby, for you to become worthwhile. Can you imagine yourself saying to your newborn child that he/she is not good enough yet? Perhaps you agree with me that it makes no sense to consider the worth of this new human being to be dependent on something that he/she may or may not become. Can you feel how 'enough' you have been from the very moment you entered this planet? You have always been enough. You have always been whole, always been worthy of love. Love is not something you need to earn; it is your birthright. For a moment, allow yourself to see if you can feel the truth behind these words.

Now let's slowly move into the future. You are no longer a newborn baby... You are a young child. As you mature, you learn about right and wrong and good and bad. Your parents teach you what it's like to be a good girl or a good boy. Soon, you notice that some things cause people around you to react more positively towards you. They praise you and say they are proud of you. Maybe you notice that when you work hard at school, help others, act kindly, get high grades, or look beautiful, you receive positive attention from others.

Likewise, you learn that some things you do result in negative attention from others. Maybe you notice that when you fail in school, or hang out with the 'wrong' crowd, or dress differently, people react in a disapproving way towards you.

Soon, you learn that some things cause the people around you to approve of you and perhaps even admire you. For a moment, being approved by others feels good. It feels as if you are good enough. It feels as if you are whole, that you are loved. How reassuring this is! However, this feeling does not last long, and you now need to make sure that after this moment of praise, you continue to get their approval. It is like a drug; once the effect is gone, you need more. So, you continue to do what will give you that feeling of relief---that feeling of being good or enough.

Now, I'd like you to think back to you as your youngest self that you can remember and connect to this young person. Remember what it felt like to be you at this young age. This might take a little time, but just see how far back you can go and try to connect to your childhood self. Perhaps you are around 7 years of age, or maybe you are 12, or maybe older. How far back you can travel doesn't matter. All that matters is that you connect to yourself at this younger age.

Now, have there been times in your few years of life where you have felt a need to be approved by others? If you can, allow yourself to go back to such a moment. What do you see? What do you feel? What are you doing to reassure yourself that you are "enough"? Just see what comes up.

Pause

Let's now continue to move forward in time. As you grow older and become more mature, you continue to be exposed to a world that appears to have rules for a successful human being that define things or action that people need to do or achieve to be considered 'valuable' or 'worthy.' Depending on your environment, you may learn that things like money, status, appearance, intelligence, power, and physical strength are important. These things are important because they reveal information about your worth.

For a moment, try to remember what it was like when you were a teenager or a young adult. Visualize yourself around this time as best you can. What was important to you at this age? What were you striving for? What did you believe made you worthy, successful, or 'enough'?

Pause

So far, we have explored what we can call your conditions of self-worth. Conditions of self-worth are those things that we believe make us lovable or 'enough.' We strive for these things so that we can feel that we are loved unconditionally. Most people live in constant fear of being "not enough," and as a result, they spend their entire lives trying to live up to the expectations and standards that surround them. These standards are conditions. Hence, most people suffer from what we can call "conditional self-acceptance," when we accept and love ourselves as long as we meet these standards.

OK, now come back to this present moment. Keep your eyes closed but bring yourself back to where you are, sitting here in this room listening to my voice. Consider your current life. Are there standards that you've picked up during your life and that you are using to evaluate yourself today? What are they? How do you know these standards are still influencing you today? How do you feel when you are not able to meet these standards?



Pause

Imagine the little child inside of you, the child you once were, who was afraid of being unloved...that you might do something that will cause other people to disapprove of you.

Now, visualize this little boy or girl standing in front of you, looking back at you. You can feel the child's fear of not being enough. This child is in deep need of being loved. Thankfully, you have the opportunity now to say something to this child. What would you say? What would you do?

Pause

Can you see that you have always been worthy of love...from the very first day you arrived?

Can you see that everyone is equally worthy from the time they are born until the time they die? As a child, you may achieve little, and yet you are still precious and worthy. And when you are old or ill, relaxed or asleep, or simply doing "nothing," you still are "worthy." Your "worthiness" cannot be measured. It can never change. During your lifetime, you may do "bad" things, but these things don't make you a bad person. Similarly, you may do "good" things, but these don't make you a "good" person. Your "worth" is always there, along with your potential to grow and learn from your mistakes. Since you cannot measure or change your worth, there is no point in being concerned about it. As best you can, let it go. You are enough just the way you are. Rather than seeking out your "worth," devote your time to learning, exploring, growing, connecting, and enjoying life.

We cannot control whether other people appreciate us or accept us, but we can learn to accept ourselves. Now, if you are ready for it, you can decide to become more accepting of yourself intentionally. This is a moment in which you can decide to see yourself for who you are rather than what you believe you should be.

To start with, allow yourself to be exactly as you are at this moment. How do you feel right now? Whatever you feel at this moment, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, allow it to be there. This is you at this moment, and that's ok. You are ok the way you are right now, regardless of what you think or feel. Just notice what goes on in your body. Maybe there is tension in your shoulders or pain in your stomach. Maybe you feel relaxed. You may feel nothing at all. It's all good. If you want, you can say to yourself, 'It's ok, whatever I feel, it's ok.' Let go of the need to mold your feelings into something different. This is you at this moment, and that's enough.

Finally, if you'd like, you may silently repeat the following phrases to yourself.

- May I accept myself for who I am right now.
- May I realize that my strengths don't mean that I am more than others.
- May I realize that my weaknesses don't mean that I am less than others.
- May I accept my imperfections. They don't define me or take away from who I am as a person.
- May I feel and deeply know that I am enough now and that I will always be enough, regardless of what happens.
- May I realize that I deserve to be loved now the same way as I deserved to be loved when I was born.
- May I treat myself the way I treat those for whom I care deeply.

Now for a moment to bring your attention back to your breath. When you feel ready, open your eyes.