

The background of the entire page is a vibrant blue, framed by a thick, black, hand-drawn style border of swirling, looping lines. The text is centered on a white background within this frame.

How to
be OK
with
Yourself

The E-Book

by Mary Tracy

Tiny acknowledgement,

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me in this crazy journey towards living my dream of building my life around sharing my truth.

I hope I won't let you down.



You are holding version 1.0 of “How to be OK with Yourself”



Copyright © 2014 Mary Tracy • Widdershins

All rights reserved.



Mary Tracy

Widdershins

web: turnwiddershins.co.uk
[@turnwiddershins.co.uk](http://turnwiddershins.co.uk)

e-mail: marytracy@turnwiddershins.co.uk
www.facebook.com/TurnWiddershins

Contents

Introduction.....	5
One, don't expect these ideas to work instantly.....	6
Two: adapt everything.....	9
Three: we will be working with our emotions.....	11
Feeling isn't thinking.....	12
Important Clarification	14
IMPORTANT if you have struggled with depression your whole life.	15
“Learning a lesson”	16
The mini-challenge:	18
“Ask yourself what you want, give an answer, let the answer be”	18
Why am I asking you to do this?	20
Here's what I asked at the workshop:.....	21
Not feeling OK with yourself and your life is normal.....	23
There is useful in going through this phase of “not feeling ok with yourself”. ..	26
The danger of separating from ourselves.....	30
Withholding Acceptance From Ourselves Until We Are “Better” is Abusive. ..	34
The Technique.....	35
“OK, I've acknowledged my pain. Now what?”	46

PAGE 4

“OK, OK, but WHAT DO I ACTUALLY DO?”47

The important thing to remember is this: it is working.....48

Final warning: 48

This is the end! (but only for now).....49

Do you still need support?.....51

INTRODUCTION

Hello, hi! Welcome to “How to be OK with yourself”, where I hope you'll learn a thing or two to help you make things ever-so-slightly less sucky.

I wanna give you a huge “You go, you!!!”. You are embarking on a healing journey that can be terrifying at the best of times. A journey that will take tons of work.

So I wanna say: it is hard work, but it is worth it. Because there's nothing quite like the feeling of being “OK” with yourself and your life.

And that's what I wish for you.

Also, it gets easier with time.

ONE, DON'T EXPECT THESE IDEAS TO WORK INSTANTLY

I know, you wish you were over “this” already. This feeling of “suckyness”, of “I suck and my life sucks and everything that ever existed sucks”. I hear you. I know this feeling... I had it for years and years and years. I know how much pain it causes.

And yet... We cannot go from “despair at the suck” to “instant happy”. It's not possible. And there's a reason for that.

Our pain is trying to tell us something. It's making doubly, triply sure that we “get it”.

So there's no way around it: we have to get it before we can move on.

The upside of this process being “slow” is that our sense of being “mostly OK” is stronger. It's like strengthening a muscle. When we show ourselves that we are “there” for ourselves, over and over and over again, we eventually get the message: “oh, ok, so no matter what happens, we can work with it, I get it”.

It's a long process, granted, but it's worth it. Because you get to a place you cannot be shaken from: If things are awesome, cool. If they are sucky, you will make it through.

Now, if you have a... how shall I say it... “overachiever” tendency, then this idea that the process takes time might be difficult to accept. You might think “but surely if I work harder, if I do yoga more often, if I do tougher yoga, then I will move faster”.

And yes, to an extent, if you keep doing the work with consistency, you will move faster. That much is obvious. (and yoga is the best

way to move things faster; I recommend Paul Grilley's "Yin Yoga") That said, you will need time to absorb the changes. And the ideas. And you won't be able to go past a certain point in your practice, no matter how hard you try. You might wish you could work harder and go faster, but it won't happen.

Because these things take time.

I'm telling you that this process will take time because I don't want you to be disappointed. Or worse: blame it all on yourself, as if you were doing something wrong.

You're not doing anything wrong. The healing process takes time, that's all.

How much time? Well... I was pretty committed to changing everything in my life, what with it being in such a mess and all. Also, I was unemployed, which makes things easier and harder.

All in all, I went from being unemployed and stuck in a seriously unhealthy relationship, through being unemployed and homeless, to starting my business and now launching this e-book.

It took me 3 years to get here.

If you're in a similar place to where I was, then we are essentially talking about radically changing who you are. (I bet you don't just wanna change yourself a bit on the side.)

Hopefully you won't be in such a place of "utter mess", so these ideas will begin to change things for you faster than they did on me.

Either way, **give yourself compassion and understanding.**
And time. Lots and lots of time.

And try not to assume that “it's not working” just because it's taking time.

The idea that “this is not working!” will show up when you're in a crisis. This is perfectly normal.

Just get back to doing the work, perhaps try something different.

But keep on going. Because you are already on this journey.

Just by wishing you could feel better and doing something about it. You're already on the healing journey.

And once more, “Go you, GO!!!”.

TWO: ADAPT EVERYTHING

Everything I'm saying, everything everyone else is saying, everything you read. Adapt it so that it makes sense to you, at the place where you are now.

This is one of the reasons why most “step by step” programmes fail: people don't adapt them so that they work for them. They are following what worked for somebody else.

Yes, you need some basic teachings and some basic techniques. But they are supposed to guide you, nothing more. Ultimately nobody can tell you what to do step by step because everyone is different and every moment is different (which is why what worked for you once may not work for you again: because the time has changed and you are different)

Some stuff won't work on you where you are right now. And that's OK.

Some stuff will never work for you, and that's OK too.

Even with the best of intentions, you won't always be able to apply the teachings and the techniques “to the letter”.

We are complex human beings, and we have a lot on our plate at any given time.

Respect where you are.

When I started, I could only take in a few of Pema Chodron's teachings. I had to let the rest “go”.

I was deeply into my “political mindset”; I could see the value of “mindfulness”, sure. But then Pema would say something like “War

and peace begin in the hearts of individuals” and I would fight back. “What about economic interests? What about Capitalism? What about Imperialism?!”.

I had to ignore all the stuff around “this is what's going on in the world”, because it clashed with my perception of the world.

When you start, you can only understand so much, and “take in” so much. Most of it will be too challenging.

That's ok. **Start slow. Always start where you are. And adapt everything.**

THREE: WE WILL BE WORKING WITH OUR EMOTIONS

It's not enough for you to read what I write, as entertaining as it may be. You have to put the ideas into practice.

And that means: practicing when the going gets rough.

Yes, I am talking about “doing this when you're in a crisis”. A “the cheese has hit the fan” crisis. ([tip: you can find out more help for dealing with “crisis” on the blog](#))

Oh, if only there was an easy way! But nope, there isn't. You have to put the techniques into practice *when* you're feeling crappy. It's the only way.

We practice when we notice that we're feeling crappy. And when we start doing this work, that's usually when we're feeling seriously crappy indeed... Which, ironically, is when it's harder to do the work.

Yes, it's a paradox: when we start, we only work with our emotions when they're at their wildest, which makes it almost impossible. As we get better at it, we work with them when they're just starting to get difficult, and that makes us more effective.

So we start small. We try a bit of acknowledging our pain. We acknowledge as much as we can stand and not more.

It's a slow process, but it's the safe way to “getting there”.

“Getting there” means: **“getting to the point you can fully acknowledge all the pain that shows up so you can release it and heal”**.

If you try to take in too much, you will fail miserably and give up fast.

The process is meant to be gradual, because you are supposed to be mindful of where you are at the moment. And respect your limitations.

Feeling isn't thinking

“Working with our emotions” means feeling things. And right now, as you read my words, you are “thinking things”.

“Feeling things” is different to “thinking things”. This is important. This is why you read books on self-help and you are left wondering “WHAT THE HELL am I supposed to DO?!?” or “why doesn't any of this make any sense?!”.

Nobody tells you this, so I am: the process will never feel the way you imagined, because feeling isn't thinking.

I'm using words right now because I can't very well walk inside your emotions and change things there. Only you can do that.

Nobody can tell you how it's going to feel because how on Earth do you explain a feeling? You can't.

People explain a feeling in self-help books and we, readers, make

the mistake of thinking “this is it”. But it's not it. Because then we have to go and actually “feel” whatever it is they are describing.

When we “read” things, we are getting them on the intellectual level. We are “thinking” them. But in order for them to work, we have to “feel” things.

So when people describe to you any aspect of the “self-work” process, you have to take it as guidance. You have to keep in mind:

- ★ This is what worked for *this* person (at one particular time)
- ★ This is how *this* person is describing a *feeling*

You can spend your life reading self-help books, and never fundamentally change anything. Because everything will sound really nice and all, but if you don't put it into practice, it's kinda useless.

And when you put things into practice, you have to let go of the guidance (ie: stuff you read) and do your own thing. Or rather “feel your own thing”.

When you start “feeling” things, the stuff you have read won't make sense... at first.

Sorry.

My biggest breakthroughs have been accompanied by “*I have no idea what's going on, why am I feeling this, what the Hell is happening, I am so lost*”.

This is actually a good sign, because it means the mind is dealing

with something “new”. And that's what “change”, is all about.
But it's Hell at the time.

So to summarise: when you start feeling things, it won't seem at all like what I'm writing here.

This is normal.

And if what I'm writing here doesn't make sense? That's normal too.

Remember: this work is trying to help you think and feel differently.

It can't just work on the “intellectual” level. You need the “emotional” level too.

IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION

I wanna make something very clear:

WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT QUASHING OUR SUCKS★

* “suck”, noun: moments of panic when we feel nothing but “I suck and my life sucks and everything sucks”.

It's not about beating the suck with a “happiness hammer”. It's about allowing the suck to be there. Allowing ourselves to feel sucky. Because we have good reason to feel sucky. Our “suck” is trying to tell us something, and we have to listen to what it is. But first we must allow it to be there.

If you don't allow the suck to be there, it will never leave.

Trust me on this one, I got myself out of decades' long depression this way. You have to be OK with feeling sucky.

Of course you don't want to be in a suck. Of course you want everything to be glorious.

But suck is where you are. And you have to tell yourself that it's OK. That you have a reason to feel sucky. And that it doesn't say anything wrong about you, or your life.

You are not a bad person, you are not a “broken” person, you are not a “failure”. You are just in a suck.

It's **temporary**, it happens, and you have to allow it to be there.
Normal.

Annoying, frustrating, enraging... but normal.

And the more “normal” you make the suck, the sooner you'll leave it.

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Or you can think of it this way: the sooner your feel all your “suck”, the sooner it will leave.

IMPORTANT if you have struggled with depression your whole life.

It's easy to believe that if you start feeling your pain, you will never stop crying. That if you “allow your suck to be there”, then you will be forever in a suck because, come on! Your pain is huge, your sucks are huge, it's like entering a vortex of horribleness.

In my experience, when I first started giving myself permission to be in a suck, they lasted a long, long time. Which was frustrating and enraging and horrible.

But as time went on, I got better at giving myself permission earlier and earlier. Which means that I get over my sucks much faster.

Now it's more like... “Oops, I'm in a suck, better go on the yoga mat and cry. There. Done. Let's get back to work”.

But I'm not “forcing” myself to get back to work. It happens on its own accord because I've felt the suck.

The thing that will make your sucks leave faster? Permission.

Make it ok to be in a suck. The more ok you make it, the easier it will be for you to feel the pain and release the suck.

"Learning a lesson"

A lot of self-help people focus on learning something from the moments of crisis. As in "your suck is trying to tell you something, so you better listen".

And yes, this is true.

However, if you're a... "learning geek" like me, you may be putting too much pressure on yourself. Like "*I must learn something from this, damnit!!! Where's my lesson?!?!?*".

And the more pressure we put on ourselves, the less likely we are to learn something.

ARGH!!! All these truths are so annoying!

Permission to find them all annoying!!!

The good side is that you can totally release your pain without knowing why the Heck it was there. It's like... **the learning experience takes place, but it bypasses your mind.**

You don't know what you learned, but some other part of you does.

(more on Point 2)

My advice is: get used to not knowing what the Heck.

That's advice for life, yo. **Growing means being in a permanent state of “*I don't know what the Heck is going on*”.**

And we all want to grow, right?

THE MINI-(CHALLENGE:

“Ask yourself what you want, give an answer, let the answer be”.

This “mini-challenge” may trick you into thinking “there is no challenge here”.

Be wary... Because the more you practice doing this, the more “challenging” it gets. And that's good. (it means you are going deeper)

What is the point of this challenge?

To allow our wants to be.

Pause and let that sink in. “To allow our wants to be”.

We always underestimate this, but allowing what we want to be legitimate is really difficult.

Here's an example of how this “challenge” can go:

“What do I want?”

“I want a wonderful house”

And instead of “silence”, what I get inside my head is: “hahaha, this is hilarious! You want a house? Seriously? How is that ever going to happen?! You would have to make a zillion pounds! And even then, where would you live? It's impossible I tell you, impossible”.

This is precisely what we want: to uncover this “running thought” going on inside our head whenever some part of us dares to say “I want something”.

The challenge is to stay silent and not reply back. **We are practicing stating what we want.** Coming clean with what we're already wanting. Holding our proverbial ground and wanting without apologising. Letting the want “be there”.

We don't need to know how we're going to get something for us to want it. Even if we wanted the Moon, that would still be a legitimate thing to want. (and who wouldn't want the Moon?)

So when that part of you starts telling you “this is impossible”, you practice staying silent.

You stay silent to:

- ★ “Yeah, sure, you want this thing, but so what, everyone wants this thing, and most people don't get it”
- ★ “Fair enough, you want it, and it would be nice, but let's be realistic, it's not going to happen”
- ★ “There's no way we would ever have that kind of money, ever”
- ★ “Not a snowball chance in Hell, those kinds of things don't happen to people like you”

Silence in the face of all of them.

We are NOT trying to “shut up” all these objections. We just don't “argue back”.

We are allowing the want that lies in our heart to have its space. Just like our objections.

We recognise that yes, there are all sorts of reasons why what we want cannot happen, at least not straight away.

AND we still want it. And that's legitimate. That's OK.

Why am I asking you to do this?

Well... You can think of it as a bonus technique.

You see, when we don't feel OK with ourselves and we feel like things suck, there's a pretty big chance that we want things to be different. (Duh)

In short: we want things. And it's usually the case that when we're not OK with wanting what we want, we default in feeling crap about ourselves. **Because feeling crap about ourselves is safer than admitting to ourselves that we want something we don't feel entitled to.**

And also, yeah, not getting what we want also sucks and hurts. And once we know what we want and we let that be ok, then we are being honest with ourselves and we can get on with working with the pain if we have to. (that's what the technique in this e-book will help you with)

It's pretty much impossible to stop ourselves from wanting something by telling ourselves we shouldn't want it. If we are wanting something truly, from the heart, there's nothing we can do but acknowledge it.

That doesn't mean we will get it, but it does mean we are no longer fighting with ourselves. There is no longer the “tug of war” of:

“I want!” / “Stop wanting! It's not going to happen”

“But I want it!” / “Well, tough, it's not going to happen!”

It then becomes:

“I want... and I have no idea how to get it... and I don't think I deserve it... but I want it”.

See? This mindset contains the “whole” of you.

(more on this later on)

Here's what I asked at the workShop:

“I want to learn how to be OK with myself regardless of how the world sees me.”

Here's what my monsters* could say:

“Ha ha ha! You will never be ok with yourself. Cannot happen. Remember how we need other people's approval? Also, mother issues. Also, you suck. The world agrees, you suck!”.

*monsters: internal voices that tend to say mean things. (Some coaches call them “limiting beliefs”, but I find that too boring).

When I make space for the “silence”, this monster voice will come up.

That's OK. That's what we want: to find out what our monster voices are saying.

Because then we can say “*a part of me wants this thing, and another part of me wants this other thing*”.

Having that moment of “Oh, this is what a part of me is saying” helps a lot, because suddenly it's not all “your thoughts”. You can see it as only “some” of your thoughts.

And it makes the whole experience more effective.

OK! So now onto the points...

NOT FEELING OK WITH YOURSELF AND YOUR LIFE IS NORMAL

Oh, yes. It's never a good time to think about this. Ever.

Some months ago I was in a serious “funk”*.

* funk: moment of serious lowness. Though I like to think it contains elements of “tantrum-ness” in it. You know, you go all lowered eyebrows and pouty and you grumble to your imaginary friend “life is Hell and then you die!”. You probably throw a few “humbags” there as well.

And I had enough “sense of humour”* left over to play my audiobook of Pema Chodron “When things fall apart”.

* my “sense of humour” might be called “dark” in such occasions...

Nothing had fallen apart, of course. I was just in a “funk”.

Anyway, she got to the part where she makes this precise point: that feeling sucky is normal.

Here she is:

“The first noble truth of the Buddha is that when we feel suffering, it doesn't mean that something is wrong. What a relief. Finally somebody told the truth. Suffering is part of life, and we don't have to feel it's happening because we personally made the

wrong move”.

It might be difficult to accept at first, this idea that “feeling sucky is normal”, because we have so much “stuff” around it. We have a strong tendency to make ourselves “wrong”, “flawed”, and think “*but *I* am particularly sucky, unlike other people*”. We have a long history of thinking we are not “normal”.

Once you work with your stuff and you give your emotions the attention they're asking for, then you can get to the part where feeling sucky is just... “*feeling sucky right now, it happens, it's normal*”.

This “funk” I mentioned earlier?

It happened on my way to Portugal. On my way to my *holiday* in Portugal.

Just about every single example of “common sense” would have consisted of “*come on! You're on holidays! Why would you feel bad? HUH? It makes no sense! You shouldn't feel bad! Snap out of it!*”.

(note: this “common sense”? It's a monster voice. Yep. How do you know? 'Cuz it sounds rather mean. They can disguise themselves as “common sense”, alright. They mean well, bless 'em)

And yes, I probably did tell myself a lot of those things at the time. I'm human, and it's a tough habit to work with.

But I've been working with my stuff for long enough to know that what actually helps is to accept that what I'm feeling is a perfectly

reasonable thing to feel, whatever it happens to be.

Yes, I was on my way to my holiday. But that's what the “mind” knows.

My body, for instance, doesn't know it's on its way to a holiday in Portugal. All it knows is that it hasn't slept in 2 days, and that it has been cramped in awkward positions for hours on end, and pulling its muscles to carry heavy stuff. And that's just my body. Being an HSP, I had probably been picking up all sorts of things, having all sorts of stuff triggered on my way to London and Portugal.

We are complex human beings. We almost never allow ourselves to feel what we feel, because we think it's not “a big deal”.

(see the post on “[Dooming and Un-dooming](#)”, on the importance of making things into a Big Deal)

We need to learn to accept that it **is** a Big Deal. If it feels like a big deal, then it is.

And through accepting that it is a Big Deal, that we have a perfectly good reason to feel what we are feeling, the “funks” and the “sucks” become normal.

We are suddenly OK about not being OK. And that helps us to get out of the “not OK” much faster.

OK, onto the second point:

THERE IS USEFUL IN GOING THROUGH THIS PHASE OF "NOT FEELING OK WITH YOURSELF"

We don't have to "like it". And goodness knows we won't.
But there is "useful" in having gone through it, even if we can't tell
at the time.

I have to make a distinction here. There's the "In the Crisis" and
then there's the "Post Crisis".

When we're "IN the Crisis", we can't see the useful.

There's almost no point in forcing ourselves to try to find the useful.

I'm warning you, because it's easy to get anxious and go "well,
damnit! Since I am in a funk, I'm gonna make damn sure I learn
something!!!"

That doesn't quite work...

At the moment of "crisis", all we can do is hold ourselves. We need
to release the pain.

A "crisis", a funk, a suck, they are "[a world of their own](#)", where the
rules of everyday life are interrupted.

After the crisis comes the “POST Crisis”. These are the moments right after the crisis, when you are “functioning” and the world more or less makes sense again. It doesn't mean that you are “out of all depression for good”. It just means you are in a state where you can accept information like this. (this being “this very e-book here”)

And it's in that state where you can take in this concept: “crisis” means there is something we need to learn. (That's why we are in a crisis.)

You can ask:

★ **“Is there a single thing I may be needing, which I can get from this period of not “ok-ness”?”**

Or

★ **“What am I getting from this moment that I may have been starving for?”**

Examples (from a real crisis I had the other day)

*Rest *space *silence *quiet *not worrying *not caring about anything *comfort (blankets) *eyes closed *self care *meeting my needs

So why am I telling you that there is something useful? Because you may just remember it in a moment of crisis, which will make it easier to allow yourself to feel crap.

And because it helps to have something to do “after” the crisis.

Just feel crap if you need to. It will help you release the pain that is already there, and you will be able to move on with life much faster.

And once you're out, you can take in things such as this “[The fastest way out of a depression crisis](#)”.

The 2 points that follow are rather challenging.

I learned them on my own, and I believe they are the result of recovering from years of suicidal feelings and self-abuse.

If they don't resonate with you at all, skip them.

I'm giving you these concepts because:

- *you may have a history of suicidal feelings and self-abuse,
- * you have probably never encountered them before
- * you have, in all likelihood, run into the advice “if you think you suck, do something about it”. And if you are reading this e-book, chances are, it didn't work.

So you may be like me: you may need to try something different.

This is that something!

THE DANGER OF SEPARATING FROM OURSELVES

“Separating from ourselves” is what happens when we feel like we suck AND we say to ourselves and our lives “NO!”.

“No, I don't want to be this sucky, sucky person.”

“No, I don't want this life of endless suck.”

We want to run away from this person, this life that we don't like. We want to leave ourselves because, frankly, we suck.

It's normal to feel this way. And we have to work with it, because... it's kinda dangerous too.

To be clear, it's not that we're saying “I don't want my life to suck AND I'm going to do something about it right now”. Some people (most people?) can pull this off. I never could.

Which is why I have to work with my sucks by accepting them first, before I go on to “change” things.

I think the reason why, if you feel you suck the whole “change yourself” idea didn't work for me was because... if the way to cope with the “I suck” feelings is to change myself into a “non-sucky” person, then it's kind of like walking away from myself.

Sort of like saying “I suck, I don't want to be this person who sucks, I am going to become a different person, someone who is not sucky”.

In other words, I am going to leave this person I am today to turn into this much better person.

This may be the more “conventional” approach, but I think it's dangerous. Why? Well...

★ you are making acceptance of yourself “conditional”.

Remember the goal is to **build unconditional acceptance for ourselves**. The kind that feels like “*no matter how bad things get, I'm here for me*”. Well, saying “*I'm not going to accept myself NOW because now is sucky*” and then trying to become less sucky is like saying “*my approval of myself is dependent on me not sucking*”.

And that's dangerous. Because, we can't count on ourselves. Sure, we all wish we could suck less in the future. But what if that doesn't happen? What if you go after something with all your heart and it doesn't work?

Who will be there for you?

Exactly. So, unconditional acceptance it is.

★ The pain gets trapped.

You know... the pain of things sucking? If you don't acknowledge it and accept it and make room for it and feel it, it gets trapped inside you. That's never good.

If your strategy for dealing with the “I suck” crisis is to focus on not sucking, then you are ignoring the “I suck” pain. When pain gets ignored, it gets trapped inside you.

And let me tell you, that only means DANGER.

★ You are kind of accepting that yes, you do suck

It's perfectly OK, normal and human to **feel** like you suck. But to actually “think” that you suck? That's a judgement of you, it's a “thought”. It's not actually “true” (even though it really, really feels like it).

Feelings are always legitimate. Thoughts? We have to be a bit more careful with thoughts. We have the power to change thoughts, not feelings. And trust me, you don't want to accept the thought “I suck”.

★ (hippie concept alert!!!) You only ever have the “now”.

Told you it was hippie. But seriously: you only ever have “now”. You can't replace the “now” with the “future”. It doesn't work that way. Even if you reached “Ultimate Non-Sucky Level” tomorrow, it doesn't change the fact that you felt sucky yesterday.

You will always have a “Now”. Sometimes the “now” will be “Sucky”. Sometimes it will be “Awesome”. And the idea is to accept the “Now” and learn from it.

Because if your acceptance of the “now” is dependent on you liking the now, then you won't learn all you need to learn from the “Nows” that suck.

★ resilience, baby

Every time you come back to yourself, every time you say to yourself “*yes, things suck, and I'm here for you*”, you are becoming more resilient to “sucks”. And that's good, especially if you want to grow in life and business, and go on to bigger and bolder things.

Bigger and bolder means “high chance of bigger and bolder

mistakes”. And if we're resilient, we feel confident that we can “bounce back” from whatever life throws our way.

★ Because the only person you really can't do without is yourself

Enough said. That's why you don't want to abandon yourself.

What breaks us, quite literally, is abandoning ourselves when the going gets rough.

(more here: “[How not to break](#)”)

WITHHOLDING ACCEPTANCE FROM OURSELVES UNTIL WE ARE "BETTER" IS ABUSIVE

OK, this point is seriously “out there”. So I mean it: if it doesn't ring true, skip it.

I learned this concept the hard way. And I get that it may be difficult to grasp.

So I don't want to say much about it. I just want you to sit with it for a second or two.

How does it feel for you? If your actions, thoughts and feelings essentially amount to saying to yourself “I won't accept you until you're better”.

Does it feel loving? Or kinda... mean?

Be careful not to jump into self-judgement over this. You know, going all “*oh, crap, I'm being abusive to myself. On top of everything else I'm doing wrong! DAMN!*”.

Notice if thoughts like this come up. Just notice whatever it is that comes up from reading this.

Now, onto the technique

THE TECHNIQUE

We're going to do some “**Acknowledging and Allowing**”.

It essentially means we are getting clear on how we're feeling (acknowledging) and we're going to try to be OK with it (allowing).

“Acknowledging” essentially means: the moment when you notice yourself saying “*DAMN IT, I am pissed off!*” or “*Damn the world, everything sucks!*”.

You are not just upset: you KNOW you are upset. There's a key difference there, because if you know you are upset, you can do something about it. Such as... “allowing”.

Allowing, in essence, means “*OK, everything sucks and guess what? I am totally allowed to feel that everything sucks. So there.*”

Remember what I said before, about how we're not trying to “quash our suck”? This is where we get to put it into practice.

Remember: this is just a suggestion. Adapt it so that it works for you, in your particular situation.

Above all, it has to make sense *to you*.

“OK, right now I feel like I'm utterly worthless. I feel like I suck, like I'm wrong in every way possible. I feel like my life is broken beyond repair.”

First step: Getting it all out!

Think of it as a rough draft.

“Stuff! Out of your head, into the light!”

This is what we get to work with. This, right here.

It's important, oh so important, to not “self censor”. To not go “*I feel I'm utterly worthless, but I shouldn't think like this because let's face it my life hasn't been all that hard and other people have it worse*”.

And it's also important to not go into the “story”. To not go “*I feel my life is broken because I have been a big fat failure my entire life. First I failed at this, and then I failed at that. And now I'm older and have nothing but failure.*” These are thoughts.

What we're looking for is getting clear on how we “feel”.

At first, when I began to do this work, I would get clear on how I was feeling by following an “[emotions list](#)”. I would use only the emotions listed that rang true for me at the time.

You can experiment with that if you want.

I found after a while that it didn't work all that well. It was too

“prescriptive”. And I needed to get my stuff out onto the paper, fast, so I could work with it.

It did give me clarity, though, and I highly recommend doing it a couple of times. It's amazing how easily we go into the whole “*I feel like my life is broken*” when, actually, this isn't a “feeling” per se, it's a “perception”.

So, you can try:

- ★ Getting your feelings out, into the open, in whichever form they come.
- ★ Using a list of emotions to get clarity on what it is that you're actually feeling.
- ★ Use a list, at a time when you're not feeling completely overwhelmed, to gain perspective, even if you don't express your feelings in the “emotions list”.

Next!

“And I am allowed to feel all these things. It makes perfect sense. I'm going through a tough time. And it's understandable that I'd feel this way.”

Here's our good old friend “allowing”.

We are trying to be “OK” with the fact that we feel what we feel, even though it's horrible.

Notice that we are not saying “*I don't feel horrible, I actually feel OK*”.

Nope. What we say is “*It's OK to feel horrible*”.

We are giving ourselves legitimacy, we are validating our feelings.

I want to pause here to ring a few metaphorical bells.

Is there a voice in your head screaming “*THIS? THIS IS WHAT YOU RECOMMEND DOING?!?! SERIOUSLY?!?! What's so ground breaking about it?!?*”

You can be honest with me (and with yourself). I would totally understand it if you were thinking “*this is doesn't look even remotely useful*”.

So I want us to take a moment, because this technique is super sneaky. By which I mean “it doesn't look like a big deal, but it is a big deal”.

This is how applying this technique is likely to look like in your mind:

Technique voice: You're allowed to feel upset.

Internal You: Yeah, yeah, I'm allowed to feel upset. Whatever.

Technique voice: No, really, I mean it: you're allowed to feel sad about this thing.

Internal You: Yes, I heard you. I'm allowed, I'm allowed. I get it.

Technique voice: No, you don't. I really, truly mean it: this thing you're upset about? It's seriously crappy. Seriously. So of course

you're upset.

Internal You: *quivering lip* You just don't know how hard this is for me!!! Nobody knows! Nobody understands me! Everyone thinks it's nothing, everyone thinks I'm just “whining”! But they don't know how I feel! They don't know how big a deal this is!!!

tears

THAT is what we're looking for. Yes, tears are likely. And they are also necessary. That's how we allow the pain to flow.

Allowing ourselves to feel sucky means, essentially, accepting that the “suck” is really sucky.

Trust me, if you were 100% convinced that you have a right to feel sucky, you wouldn't even be needing this book. You would understand that you were having a “moment”, that you needed time and care to recover, and that it would take as long as it takes.

But I bet you aren't there right now. I bet there's a drowned out voice at the back of your mind screaming “*we need to get over this! NOW! OVER THIS! NOW!!!*”.

And that never works.

It needs to fully sink in that you are upset for a damn good reason. You are not “mad”, you aren't just upset because you have nothing better to do.

Give yourself legitimacy. I know it's hard, especially when you've had a lifetime of practice telling yourself “*STOP WITH THE WHINING AND GET OVER YOUR CRAP ALREADY!*”.

Doubly especially since our culture essentially repeats this

statement, over and over again.

It seems to mainstream society that no amount of “upset” is ever “upsetting” enough to merit being upset over it. I have been through some pretty traumatic stuff, you can trust me on this one: no upset is ever upsetting enough to people. So you have to give yourself legitimacy.

Then you can kindly correct people when they adopt the “stop whining and get over it” attitude. And tell them to back off. But in the meantime? Focus on yourself. **And give yourself legitimacy.**

ONWARDS!

“And I wish things were different, and I'm allowed to wish for my life to be different.

But things are the way they are right now, and I'm in pain.”

The key is to acknowledge fully what's going on. **That's why we focus, on the one hand on our pain at the way things are. And on the other, on the wish for things to be different.**

That way we acknowledge *everything* that's going on for us: the hurt and the longing.

“I'm acknowledging how bad I feel.

I'm acknowledging how I feel horrible about myself and about my life and about this whole situation.”

Permission Point! Permission to use creatively horrid language: granted!

If you're like me and you have a tendency to go all “everything is horrible, me, myself, my life and the whole planet and possibly every dimension in the known Universe. Oh, and I also hate

everyone”. Please do so. Don't hold anything back. This is your space to vent.

Treasure your spaces to vent; they will keep you sane.

“I'm acknowledging my shame because I feel I should be different and better.”

“I'm acknowledging my guilt because I really think I shouldn't be feeling this way at all, I think I should feel fine already.”

Here I'm making a go at acknowledging 2 particular feelings, shame and guilt. This is kind of an advance practice, because at first all we can do is go “waaaah, waaaah *sobs* everything is horrible and, *oh, I'm allowed to feel horrible*”

But in time, it gets easier. And I do want to show you how to expand your practice in time, so that it's more “thorough”.

(You can start out by using Non-violent Communication, to better understand “feelings” and [you can always use a list to get clear on what you're feeling.](#))

Permission Point! You have permission to not be clear on what you're feeling, and to just babble incoherently. I do it all the time and it still works.

“And I don't have to be ok with myself right now, I don't have to stop feeling like crap.”

“I'm giving myself permission for things not to change, and for things to change if they have to change.”

“I'm also giving myself permission for things to stay the same.”

“I'm allowed to want things to be different, it makes perfect sense that I would want things to be different.”

More permission! Permission everywhere! :D And allowing.

“What do I need? I really want to know.
What qualities would I like right now? Comfort, support, love, compassion, appreciation.
How can I find out what I need? How can I give myself what I need? How can I be ok with my needs?
Do I need to give myself permission to need things?”

OK. Asking for what we need? Scary and hard.

At the beginning this is likely to go:

Technique voice: “OK, what do I need?”

Internal you: “I don't know!!! *sobs*”

Then you go back to acknowledging the pain.

So you don't know what you need? You have no clue what you want? No matter! Just by asking yourself what you need you are showing humongous amounts of support for yourself. That is where the truly transformational work happens: in staying with yourself and doing what you can.

After you've used this technique for a while (read: a couple of years) you can start playing with “spiritual qualities”.

This is rather challenging, so only embark on this part of the process if you feel ready for it.

Basically you want to identify the “essence” of what you want. That essence will be made up of its spiritual qualities. And you can always give yourself these qualities, in one form or another.

For now, focus on giving yourself permission to want and need things you can't have right now. That is challenging enough.

“And Is it possible that I'm not recognising what I need because I'm scared, because I don't want to change things? Because that would make perfect sense.

If that's the case, I give myself permission to not want to change things.”

“This is me, working with my stuff. Interacting with my pain. I'm here, I am working with my stuff, and I'm wishing good things for myself. And I'm doing what I can.”

This step is so important, in my humble opinion.

Why? Because here is the reason why most “self-work” stops... happening. Because we feel we're not working “hard enough”.

Remember what I said at the beginning? That this technique “doesn't look like a big deal, but it is a big deal”?

We are hard programmed to think that this technique, along with all the other “work with your stuff” techniques, are not near “enough”.

Our stuff keeps us looking “elsewhere”. The answer couldn't possibly be a simple exercise in self talk! Right? It has to be something “big”, right?

Here's the key: **the answer lies in the regularity of the practice. Not so much on the “big-ness”.**

Which is to say: the only way to get somewhere is to keep doing this and keep doing it.

Which is why, when we're doing it, we need to remind ourselves that we are in this process; this “journey”.

We are already in this practice of “working with our stuff”. And we are doing what we can.

Here's another key: **accepting that you're doing what you can.**

Mainstream culture will have you believe that “you could always do better”.

I say **BS** poppycock.

We are always doing our best at any given time. That's it.

Even if you don't accept it as a Universal value, you can remind yourself that you are doing what you can while you're practicing.

“*I am here*”

Saying “*I am here*” sends a message to the subconscious that you are not abandoning yourself even when the going gets rough and you really feel like leaving the planet.

It's also the very essence of mindfulness, which is where change happens.

So say to yourself “*I am here*”. And try to mean it.

In fact, say it often.

“I'm wishing good things for myself”

I heart the practice of wishing good things for myself. See, it is the sneakiest way of bringing into “what can you do about it”.

It's at the end of the technique that you should, in theory, focus on what you can actually *do*.

(see next session)

For me, personally, being in a “suck”, tends to mean “a Serious Suck”.

So I bring in something I am usually very much feeling at the time: wishing good things would come my way.

By doing that I keep my practice being all about “fully acknowledging where I am”. Remember, that is the very essence of mindfulness: fully acknowledging everything that's going on for you at the time.

So, to summarise, the technique means acknowledging:

- ★ the pain of hurting about a situation
- ★ the desire for the situation to not be there or for me to not be hurting
- ★ and the wish I have for the future to bring different things.

"OK, I'VE ACKNOWLEDGED MY PAIN. NOW WHAT?"

I used to think I had to do "something" special after I acknowledged my pain.

Or that if I had done the work "correctly", then I would have reached a new level of understanding and I should be able to learn something super important about the experience.

Then I realised that these ideas were just making things worse. I would feel terrible about not knowing what to do next, about not having reached an "enlightened state" where I knew exactly what to do.

Here's the thing: sometimes, after you allow yourself to feel the pain, you reach a tiny magical place known as "Oh... ok... now I know what to do". Or "Oh... ok... now I can understand things better".

It's happened a couple of times. [Like when I had a "social anxiety crisis"](#).

It's rare. It happen, but it's rare.

Now, the opportunities for "acknowledging and allowing my pain", oh, those have been countless.

There has been no "insight". And I didn't take any action.

All I did was "acknowledge and allow" my pain. And you know what happened?

My pain flowed "out". There. It's no longer with me.

That means that I'm no longer hurting (so much) from countless unpleasant experiences that have piled up inside my heart for decades.

And with that comes “clarity”, all on its own. When you're no longer hurting (so much) from an experience, you have a better idea of what to do.

“OK, OK, but WHAT DO I ACTUALLY DO?”

You breathe.

And then, here's a list of what you can do, depending on how you're feeling.

- ★ If you have an insight into what happens next, that's great. Now you know what to do.
- ★ If you feel more “calmed” after this exercise, and you know what you need to do, because it's what you needed to do all along, awesome.
- ★ If you don't feel remotely “calmed”, or if you feel even less calmed than when you started, that's a sign that you need to allow your pain some more. (and give yourself some compassion there!)
- ★ If you don't feel any different, or if you feel it hasn't worked, leave it. Come back at some other time.

The important thing to remember is this: it is working

In all likelihood you won't feel it's working at the time you are allowing. You only notice that afterwards.

But it is working.

If you are honestly, hand-on-heart, allowing yourself to feel your pain and your suck, then you are actively releasing pain. So it **is** working. (It may just take a while.)

Final warning:

Above all: do not force yourself to allow more than you can stand to allow.

Because that would be violent.

If it's not happening in a compassionate way, ie: “I'm crying my eyeballs out, and I'm hating it, but I'm allowing myself to cry and hate it” then stop. If at any point it feels like you're “forcing yourself”, stop.

You don't want to turn the “technique to help you release pain” into yet another way to beat yourself up.

THIS IS THE END! (BUT ONLY FOR NOW)

I want to say a few things before I'm done.

I do wish you well. I honest-to-Goodness wish you the very best.

This stuff is hard... “Stuff” is hard... I should know. I've been through all the colours of the misery-rainbow.

And I know that one of the things that helped the most is people giving a damn about whether I get better or not.

So here I am. Telling you that I do care, and that I do wish you the very best. From the heart.

I don't want to see people suffering. That's why I do what I do. That's why I teach you what helped me.

Yes, we will experience painful situations, but the relentless “fighting with yourself”, “sandpapering your soul from the inside until you bleed”, “going through the pain over and over again”? That we can avoid. And this is how.

Working with our Stuff. Acknowledging the suck, the pain. Allowing it to be there. Accepting that it is a big fricking deal.

Then... releasing it.

This is what got me through my decades-long “depression” and all the unhealed, unacknowledged pain I carried.

This is what got my business started.

This is what got this book written and launched.

And I hope this is what helps you make things suck a little less.

DO YOU STILL NEED SUPPORT?

I really want these ideas to help you heal. And I do genuinely care about you getting better.

If there's something in this e-book that doesn't make sense to you, **get in touch**.

If you are wondering how you can apply this work on your life, **get in touch**.

In short, if you need extra help, my inbox is always open. You can write to me at

marytracy@turnwiddershins.co.uk.



And if you need extra-extra support and you want to hire me for coaching, that's an option too.

I'm wishing you the very best. I'm wishing you all the healing you are looking for.

And remember you're not alone in this journey.

I'll see you on the blog. <http://www.turnwiddershins.co.uk>
Or Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/TurnWiddershins>

Love, support and beams of “ok-ness”.

Mary Tracy