

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build this trait in yourself, your family or your class.



- To build acceptance across differences, spread out as a class or family in a room. Have each person draw their view all facing one direction. Share the drawings and talk about how each person's view of that room is different from their place in the room. Notice if there are elements in the drawings that can't be seen by others from their view. How difficult or easy it is to accept that person's viewpoint? Discuss how this can apply to emotions and how each person may feel differently even in the same situation. Talk about how this could apply to families, classes, teams, social media, workplaces, neighborhoods or other groups.



Acceptance

Looking at the word Acceptance, we can look into the Latin root of "capere", meaning **take**. This is expanded to view Acceptance as "Taking what is offered". When accepting our thoughts, emotions and experiences without judgement or attempts to change them, we are actually making space for change to follow. In the words of Carl Jung in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*:

"We cannot change anything unless we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate; it oppresses."

A psychological definition of acceptance is "taking a stance of non-judgmental awareness and actively embracing the experience of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations as they occur". (Hayes, et al., 2004).

As parents, teachers or other adults who interact with children, we can have a tendency to critique children. In fact, it's part of the job of parenting or teaching to give feedback. However, finding ways to promote non-judgmental acceptance and meeting a child where they are can make a huge difference in their day. Meeting ourselves with non-judgmental acceptance can also impact our own day (week, year, decade, life) positively.

One practice that builds this trait is to practice mindfulness, or being in the present moment and noticing whatever thoughts, emotions or sensations may arise in that moment without any judgement. Imagine a world where adults and children were accepting of who we are in the moment.



- While watching a movie/ show/play or reading a book, notice and accept the emotions that come up in you by acknowledging them without judgement. Also notice the differences in emotions expressed by the characters, and practice accepting them without judgment. Talk about how easy or hard it is to accept the characters', your own emotions, or others' emotions, and which types of emotions may be more difficult or easier to accept.
- Talk about favorites as a class or family. Discuss favorite foods, books, movies, activities, sports, songs, YouTube channels, charities, outfits, etc. Practice accepting your own and other's favorites without trying to convince them toward your own favorites.
- Images courtesy of [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

... if we want our children to love and accept who they are, our job is to love and accept who we are.

Brené Brown, 2015, p. 219

Some may wonder if acceptance leads to giving up or may prevent someone from changing their circumstances (such as stopping a bad habit or setting a resolution for the new year). Several research studies have investigated this and found that acceptance was related to greater wellbeing, reduced emotional responses to stressors, and that building a practice of acceptance increased the length of wellbeing experiences. What they noted though, was that acceptance needs to be directed at emotions and inner experiences, rather than accepting stressful situations, including mistreatment, which could prevent someone from taking steps to change their situation.

As we start a new year, look for ways to build in acceptance of your own emotions and of those around you. In fact, applying acceptance to ourselves helps us to apply this to others, especially across differences.

(Note: Immediate safety needs must be addressed such as by calling or texting 988 to reach a crisis line.)

References:

Brown, B. (2015). Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead. Avery.

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., Bunting, K., Twohig, M., & Wilson, K. G. (2004). What is acceptance and commitment therapy?. In A practical guide to acceptance and commitment therapy (pp. 3-29). Springer, Boston, MA.

Jung, C. G. (1933). Modern man in search of a soul. Harcourt, Brace



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