

Accept What Is...to Keep Moving Forward



By Gayle Crist,
Life Coach,
Healthy Life Planning

The older I get, the more I realize that acceptance is the key to success in almost every aspect of life:

- Our relationships are better if we accept our partner just the way he is.
- Our work life is better if we accept the fact that we can't change our boss or coworkers—and instead find ways to adapt to circumstances as they are.
- Our attitude about everything is better if we stop struggling and accept the fact that bad stuff happens—and the best coping strategy is to let it go and move on.

I'm sure there are one or more aspects of your life that you sometimes find hard to accept. But is it worth your time and effort to bemoan those things or spin your wheels trying to change them?

Wouldn't your time be better spent (and your energy conserved) if instead you found ways to return to a peaceful place? To follow the Buddhist principle of Equanimity (to accept reality as it is without craving or aversion) so you can relax enough to envision and then implement a solution?

I have helped many clients over the years who stayed so angry and unaccepting about something bad that happened (for example, a divorce)—that they were paralyzed. Their “monkey mind” kept replaying the tape of the nasty things their soon-to-be-ex-husband did, and they were too stuck in that loop to imagine how to leave that chapter of their lives behind and start over.

My job as their coach was to help them channel their anger in a new more-productive direction, as impetus for them to imagine and create their new single life. As their “possibilities partner,” I co-created a vision for their healthier, happier

Gayle Crist, M.S., is a life coach based in Ambler. She helps people create healthier, happier lives; find more life balance; navigate life transitions such as separation/divorce; start a business; get organized to complete an important project; write/edit their first book, or follow through on other life goals. Gayle is also a writer, editor, and proofreader (www.cristeditorialservices.com) and the author of How I Met My Second Husband Online at Age 50. Information about her life coaching services is at www.healthylifeplanning.com, and her life coaching blog is found at <https://gayle4244.wixsite.com/website/blog>. Contact Gayle at 267-245-3023 or coach@healthylifeplanning.com.

future, held that vision for them when they lost sight of it, and encouraged them when they were doubtful, unmotivated, or lacking hope.

Soon, they came to accept that the past happened but was over. That was then; this was now. And the healthiest way to proceed was to focus on what they wanted tomorrow rather than what they lost yesterday...or what felt hard to do today. They accepted the fact that life is a journey, and sometimes the path takes us in unexpected or unfortunate directions. But, to make progress and find happiness, we need to get back on the path and start forward again—without fear.

I'm reminded of a recent incident where I had some fear come up that almost stopped me on my path. I was pushing my 2-year-old granddaughter Louisa in a stroller on the way back from the Doylestown Library when a thunderstorm came up out of the blue. I put up my umbrella to try to protect her, but the rain came down so hard and the wind was so wild that the umbrella was useless. All I could do was accept the fact we'd get soaked as we kept walking 10 more minutes to home.

Unfortunately, I was okay about getting wet but very afraid of the lightning that was striking every few minutes. I tried not to think about how it might bring down a branch on us, but it was tough. I was SO concerned about Louisa's safety! I tried desperately to find a place to take cover, but there was none. I called 3 people to see if they could drive to pick us up, but nobody was available.

Just then, an elderly man stopped his van and got out to give us his umbrella. He looked at Louisa and said it looked like she was sleeping. But the truth was she was quietly sitting with her head to one side, letting the rain come down on her. She didn't cry or complain. She seemed to just accept what was happening. When we finally got home, she said to her mom “We got wet!” as if it was a fun adventure. Little did she know how terrified her Grammy was!

Are you good at accepting what life throws at you? Or do you need support in overcoming obstacles and moving toward your life goals?

In her 2-year-old world, where she had no idea how destructive thunderstorms could be, she existed in the present moment, focused only on the feel of the rain on her body for the first time. She had no worries or fears. I, on the other hand, was projecting into the future with “what-if” scenarios and found myself frustrated and on the verge of tears, running as fast as I could to get us home safely. I was amazed at how well she handled the emergency and very thankful she didn't see the fear on my face.

What about you? Are you good at accepting what life throws at you? Or do you need support in overcoming obstacles and moving toward your life goals? If so, let's talk. I'd love to be your motivator!

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