

105. Radical Acceptance and how to get more done without the stress

SPEAKERS

Vanessa

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Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

Welcome back to the podcast, you are listening to Episode 105. And we are talking about radical acceptance today. So I want to start off by sharing a story with all of you. So before I went to medical school, I was a social justice activist working on all sorts of issues, specifically healthcare access and racial justice issues. And back in my younger days, when I was doing this work, I was really self-righteous. I thought that our way was the right way, everyone else's way was wrong. And I can just see myself back in those days, I would be at bars, meeting new people, you know, just hanging out with my activist difference after a day of doing work. And anyone I met, I tried to convince them that they were wrong and that our way was right. And I thought that if I wasn't always pushing hard against the other side, or if I wasn't passionate enough, that it would mean that I didn't care enough about the issues that I wasn't being passionate, you know, and for a young fiery activist, the thought of not caring enough, that's the worst thought ever. So what I was actually doing, though, is I was refusing to even see the other side, I was refusing to even accept that the other side could have a point could have, you know, is refusing to even listen to their side of the story.

So yeah, we'd have these huge events where a bunch of people would come when we would do our work. But it was always the people that were already on our side. Because here's the thing, when we're so resistant, what does that create? Not how you recreate it for me. When I was so resistant, I had thoughts that must be wrong. I'm definitely right. I had thoughts of, oh, it's so frustrating. Why can't they just change? And I had thoughts of Them being so annoying. And when I had those thoughts would feelings would it create for me, they would create feelings of anger, or frustration of annoyance. Now, you can imagine when you're resisting the other side, when you're resisting reality, and you have these thoughts of it's so frustrating, they're always wrong. Why can't they just change? Do you feel frustration, anger, and annoyance? What do you do?

How do you show up, you're probably short with people, you're closed off, you don't listen with an intention to understand, and you might come off as arrogant or rude, or like me pretty self-righteous. And what you end up creating ultimately, is more stress and more negative energy, essentially, the very thing that you're trying to change, you're pushing away. And that was definitely my reality. And I

remember, you know, back in my young days when I was doing this work, and it was one night after we had finished a campaign, and we were having dinner and I was with a bunch of people, I looked up to people that had been doing this work, you know, activists that were in their 60s, had been doing this work forever. And we read this dinner, and I remember looking and watching them like smile and laugh and just enjoy their life. I was like, What the heck, there's all this injustice, how are they just sitting here? You know, like, why are they upset? Why are they angry that this exists?

I laugh now, when I think about it, because, you know, to think that these folks were so successful in what they were doing, and so good at it without the anger. I didn't understand at that time. And remember, once I went and asked one of my mentors, how is it that they can keep doing this work. How is it that they're in their 60s, and they can keep doing this work? And he said, you know, the work is never done. Injustice exists. And the work is never done. You just got to accept it. You got to accept that it's there, and you just keep doing the work. And at that time, I sort of kind of understood but I didn't fully internalize what what he had said to me. And it took me a long time to internalize what he had said. And now after you know doing this work for so many years and understanding the strength of radical acceptance. I bring this to you, I bring this lesson to you. Because I've seen the difference it's made in my life.

And here's the thing, that radical acceptance, accepting what is doesn't mean that you agree with the other side. It doesn't mean that you can don't the other side's behavior. And it doesn't mean that you're not going to keep doing the work to make a difference. Whether that's in your relationships, maybe there's, you know, a boss you don't agree with, maybe there's a child in your home, maybe it's your kid that's going through teenage years or something difficult. You know, whatever it is, when you're pushing against or wishing that they would change, what you're in fact doing is you're resisting who they are, and who they are isn't what's causing you the stress, what's causing you the stress is that you wish that they were somebody different.

What radical acceptance allows you to do is it allows you to surrender to reality, and let go of the stress you're creating by pushing against it. Now, I want to create an image for you, in case this is helpful for you, I want you to imagine that you're trying to cross the street. And you get to this part of the street, and you can't cross because there's a wall in front of you. And you're using all your energy to push against that wall to get it to move because you want to get to the other side, and you're pushing it and you're kicking it and you're doing whatever you can to get it to move and you're so angry that it's not moving and you're frustrated, and you get exhausted that it just won't move, why won't the wall move. And then you finally you're like, Okay, I guess the walls not gonna move, and you accept it, you accept the walls not gonna move. And when you accept it, you're able to take a step back, and you're able to take a deep breath. And you're able to use all of that energy that you were using to push against that wall.

And instead, you use that energy, just you look to the right, or you look to the left, and you realize that there's a door and look on the other side, there's a window, I can get to the other side, I just need to walk over here and open the door, or just need to walk over here and open this window, I could just walk around the wall to get to the other side. When you accept reality for what it is, when you stop pushing against that wall, you can yes, you can then use all that energy that you were using to resist

that. And instead, use that energy to make a change. use that energy to see another way, another way that's possible. So here's my invitation to you today. I want you to just take a second and ask yourself wearing your life is your resistance to reality, causing you unnecessary stress. Again, maybe it's in a relationship where you keep wishing or hoping that the other person would change, where you're refusing to accept them for who they are. Maybe it's in your commute to work, you know that there's going to be traffic.

But instead, you instead of accepting the traffic, every time you experience it, you get frustrated, and you hope that it was different. Why do I always have to sit through traffic, this commute stinks. What would it be like if instead, you were like, Okay, here's the traffic? Here's the traffic that's going to be here. Every time I drive on this route. You know what, I'm just going to accept the traffic for what it is. And I'm going to listen to a podcast, I'm going to take a deep breath. I'm going to take this time to practice mindful community. I'm going to call my mom, I've been meaning to connect with her. That's what's possible when you accept instead of resist the traffic. How would your life be different if you chose to radically accept reality for what it was? And here's again, one last reminder that once you have this awareness, and you notice how these certain thoughts make you feel, you notice where the resistance is coming up.

You notice that frustration that you have you notice that you're frustrated when you see the traffic, you're frustrated every time your significant other or your teenage kid does this thing that annoys you. I want to remind you that you don't have to radically accept once you notice that that's and you notice your frustration. You can choose to keep being frustrated if you want. Just notice how that makes you feel. And once you do from there, you can decide, is this what I want to keep doing? I want to end by just sharing a quote with all of you that really resonated with me back in my 20s. And if you ever email me on my personal email, you'll see it in my email signature. And I've had it there for many, many, many, many, many years, at least two decades. Because it still holds true for me today. And it came from back in my younger days when I finally started understanding that as an activist, I had I had to let go of that resistance because it wasn't making me more effective. In fact, it was making me ineffective. So the quote comes from the Talmud. And I'm going to try to share it remembering because I didn't write it down.

But it goes like this. Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. You are not obligated to complete the work. But neither are you free to abandon it. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it. Alright, sweet friends, I invite you to practice radical acceptance today. And to notice the peace that it creates for all of you. Have a wonderful week.

Hey, sweet friends, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us on the journey. It's my all-inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at vanessacalderonmd.com/join. I'll see you there.