

acceptance

a person's acknowledgment of the *reality* of a situation, a process, or condition without attempting to change it or protest it



Your current life is made up of all you've been given so far. Your experiences, your setbacks, who your family is or isn't, your abilities—the lot we've been assigned is out of our control...

But what we do with and how we respond to it **is** in our control.

To understand what acceptance is and looks like, we must understand what it is not. *Acceptance is not apathy, laziness, or idle helplessness. It's not the status quo or refusing to push yourself.* Acceptance is simply coming to terms with what is real (irrevocably true). It has nothing to do with whether you're happy about said reality, and has everything to do with a peaceful acknowledgement of that thing—that concrete thing—being true. Acceptance is saying, I care deeply and while this is not preferred, *I acknowledge that this is my reality ~ my responsibility lies in how I bear it.* Acceptance is not repeatedly getting angry over something existing.

Acceptance transcends that cycle, empowering us to decide what to do given the circumstance. The path toward acceptance asks two questions: 1). Can this be changed? and 2). If the answer is no, what work needs to be done to accept this, emotional or otherwise?

When you've accepted something, you don't have an outburst every time it surfaces. True acceptance only leaves room to be pleasantly surprised. Acceptance yields freedom. When your emotions are no longer at the mercy of an external factor, you're freed to expend energy on efforts that produce and fulfill.

To be "stoic" is usually a word used for anyone who could face adversity calmly and without excess emotion. But that is an oversimplification. The Greek Stoics were philosophers who taught the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive (and unhealthy) emotions.

Research shows that stress plays a role in the development of major illnesses like heart disease, depression, and anxiety disorders. **So what can we do about it?**

A distinguishing element of the Stoics is the following: they accepted reality—the real, the here, and the now. It wasn't a passive acceptance they exhibited (not succumbing or just "giving up"), but an active one marked by *a commitment to operating at their highest capacity within the circumstances* they found themselves. **This means we are to actively identify ways to be improved by the realities we're faced with, rather than diminished by them.**

Our thriving demands a graceful acceptance of our realities, subsequently opening up the space necessary to creatively navigate next steps. It's the simple question of, "What does this reality require me to do?"

When it comes to our lot in life, we either overcome it, or accommodate it. Accommodate doesn't mean giving up. It means designing a lifestyle that enables you to not be destroyed by that thing. Most problems that can't be solved *can be managed*. The question turns from "How can I get rid of this thing?" to, "How can I not be debilitated by it?" The latter requires acceptance, generating a creativity that enables thriving.