



drpam@drpamrussell.com

Pamela Russell Services

752 Blanding Blvd. #131 - Orange Park, FL 32065

904-830-0737 Phone • 904-272-5603 Fax

www.drpamrussell.com

Learning to Rate Behavior Rather Than The Self

BACKGROUND

Self-acceptance refers to the relationship you have with yourself. You accept yourself despite weaknesses or deficiencies. You can use the word “unconditional” to better understand that self-acceptance is not based on passing evaluation. Evaluations are based on varying standards, both yours and other peoples. You simply are OK with you, whether you meet certain expectations or standards or not. Unconditional self-acceptance means you fully accept yourself. Whether you behave intelligently, correctly, competently, and/or whether other people approve, respect, or love you, you accept you. You don’t feel “less” than others because of your weaknesses and failures. You also do not feel “better” than others because of your strengths and successes. Self-acceptance is the hallmark of a healthy relationship with the self.

Please be aware of this: Self-acceptance does not mean that you don’t evaluate your behavior. You absolutely take time to reflect on your actions and are willing and motivated to make changes and improve. However, the evaluation is of the actions and not of the self. Self-acceptance does not make you a person who manipulates, deceives, and exploits others without empathy or remorse. When confronted with personal shortcomings, you evaluate your actions. You can/will experience sadness, disappointment, or loss. Always keep in mind, your “self” as a whole is not devalued. You realize that you:

- Are not a sociopath. You are a person who acted inappropriately.
- Have faults and can work on correcting them without blaming, condemning, or dooming yourself for having them.
- Can identify weaknesses without defining yourself by them.

The reason you can devalue the action and not you is because you see yourself as worthy of esteem and love. You know and feel deeply that you are “enough”, and that a mistake or shortcoming does not mean you are not worthy of the love.

GOAL

I designed this exercise for you to explore the difference between rating your “self” and rating your behavior as you look at past mistakes and regrettable actions.

ADVICE

You use this exercise as over and over. For instance, at the end of the day, you can take the time to reflect on any mistakes or regrettable actions of the day and practice evaluating your actions rather than your “whole self”. You can use it to practice awareness of action-evaluation. When you notice you are evaluating your “self” instead of your actions, pause and evaluate the behavior only. Over time, this may be a powerful way for you to relate differently to your mistakes.

INSTRUCTIONS

We all make mistakes, and we all do things we are not proud of from time to time. How we evaluate our mistakes or regrettable actions can differ. Some of us may see our actions as proof of being a “flawed” or “unworthy” human being. Others may see them as inevitable occurrences that are merely a part of being human. In this exercise, you will explore these two ways of evaluating mistakes or regrettable actions.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY PAST MISTAKES

Make a list of things you have done in your past (don't go too far back) that you are not proud of or that you wish you did differently (not less than 5, not over 10). I gave some examples. If you can use them if you want and they apply to you. You can also write your own and list them in the first column in the table below.

STEP 2: EVALUATE YOURSELF AS A PERSON

For each of the actions listed in the first column, evaluate your "self", your personal as the reason for making the mistake. What personal characteristics could explain the mistake? Write your "self" evaluation in the second column.

STEP 3: EVALUATE YOUR BEHAVIOR

In the third column, evaluate your behavior (the actions you took, the words you said), regarding the mistake. What are the circumstances/situation that you responded to that explains the mistake?

Past mistake/regrettable action	Evaluation of the self	Evaluation of behavior
I forgot my friend's birthday.	I am a lousy friend; I am careless.	I did not put the date on my calendar; I got busy.
I got married.		
I am providing for my children's wants and needs.		
I did not get good marks on my employee review.		
I did not show up for my friend/family member.		
I let my hobby get in the way of fulfilling a promise.		
I don't feel good about how I handled that situation.		
I was not as dedicated to help as I said.		
I was not faithful to my relationship with God (my higher power).		
I am not living a fulfilled life.		

STEP 3: EVALUATE YOUR BEHAVIOR

- How did you feel about completing this exercise?
- Do you feel differently about yourself now that you have considered your responses in the second column versus the third column? If so, how?
- Which responses (second or third column) are more motivating? Which ones inspire you to improve yourself to do better next time?
- Going forward, will you aim to evaluate your "self" or your behavior when you make a mistake or behave regrettably? Why or why not?