

Chapter 6

Acknowledge Reality: “Nevertheless!”

Now that you have acquired the skill of recognizing and replacing self-defeating thoughts, you are ready for a skill that is quite a favorite among students of self-esteem. The appeal of this skill is that it helps one acknowledge reality and still feel good about one's core self.

First, let's review some key points:

1. Feeling bad about events, behaviors, outcomes, or some other external can be appropriate (as in appropriate guilt or disappointment). This is different from the unhealthy tendency to feel bad about the core self (previously described as shame).
2. Saying “I am not quite adequate for the job yet” is quite different from “I’m no good *as a person*.” Feeling bad about failing is very different from “I am a failure” at the core.
3. It's okay to judge your behaviors and skills, but not your core, essential self.

A Skill-Building Activity

We want to acknowledge unpleasant external conditions without condemning the core self. People who dislike the self tend to use *Because . . . therefore* thoughts. For example, "Because of (some external condition), therefore I am no good as a person." Obviously, this thought will erode self-esteem and/or keep it from developing. So we want to avoid *Because . . . therefore* thoughts.

The *Nevertheless* skill provides a realistic, upbeat, immediate response to unpleasant externals—a response that reinforces one's sense of worth by separating worth from externals. Therefore, instead of a *Because . . . therefore* thought, we use an *Even though . . . nevertheless* thought. It looks like this:

Even though _____ *nevertheless* _____
(some external) (some statement of worth)

For example: "*Even though* I botched that project, *nevertheless* I'm still a worthwhile person."
Other *Nevertheless* statements are:

- Nevertheless, I'm still of great worth
- Nevertheless, I'm still an important and valuable person
- Nevertheless, my worth is infinite and unchangeable

A "Nevertheless" Exercise

Get a partner. Ask your partner to say whatever negative things come to mind, be they true or false, such as:

- You really blew it!
- You have a funny nose!
- You mumble when you talk!
- You bug me!
- You're a big dummy!

To each criticism, put your ego on the shelf, and respond with an *Even though . . . nevertheless* statement (Howard 1992). You'll probably want to use some of your cognitive therapy skills. For example, if someone labels you "a dummy," you could respond, "Even though I behave in dumb ways sometimes, nevertheless . . ." Author Jack Canfield (1988) is fond of a similar approach that even a five-year-old child can apply: "No matter what you do or say, I am still a worthwhile person."

Skill-Building Worksheet

Steps

1. For each of the next six days, select three events that have the potential to erode self-esteem.
2. In response to each event, create an *Even though . . . nevertheless* statement. Then describe below the event or situation, the statement used, and the effect on your feelings of selecting this statement and saying it to yourself. Keeping a written record reinforces the skill.

Date	Event/Situation	Statement Used	Effect
Day One			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Day Two			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Day Three			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Day Four			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Day Five			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Day Six			
1.			
2.			
3.			

Chapter 22

Accept That You Aren't Perfect

Growing is like climbing a mountain. If you know you have a firm footing, then you push up with confidence and it's fun. Factors I and II are the firm footings of growth. As you set out to grow and to enjoy the process, some people might "rain on your parade" by reminding you in one way or another that you and/or your efforts are less than perfect. The following *Nevertheless* skill varies slightly from the previous two *Nevertheless* skills in that it takes this form:

Even though *I am not perfect.* nevertheless _____
(or some other statement of fact) (some statement of growing)

For example, someone tells you that you can't do anything right. You think:

Even though *I'm not perfect.* nevertheless *I'm growing.*

Other *Nevertheless* statements are:

- I'm sure trying.
- I'm learning.

- I'm on course and moving along.
- I'm still new at this and finding my way.
- I still enjoy trying.
- I think I can improve.
- My worth is infinite, I appreciate my efforts, and I have as much right to try as anybody.
- I still "work."
- I'm having fun.
- I'm developing in other ways.
- Learning is still adventurous.
- I'm more today than I was yesterday.
- I still persist/get it done.

Can you think of others that you like?

Even Though I'm Not Perfect ... Nevertheless

Partner Practice: An Exercise

Select a partner. Ask your partner to say whatever negative statements come to mind, be they true or false, like:

- My frog has a quicker wit than you do!
- Singing lessons? You?
- Your lousy memory lost us that account!
- You'll never amount to much!
- Why are you so slow?
- Your personality bugs me!

To each criticism, put your ego on the shelf, and respond with an *Even though I'm not perfect ... nevertheless* statement. Try to keep your sense of humor and respond with an upbeat feeling.

Accept Your Imperfections: An Exercise

1. For each of the next six days, select three events with the potential to erode self-esteem.
2. In response to each event, select an *Even though I'm not perfect, nevertheless* statement. Then describe below the event or situation, the statement used, and the emotional effect you experience from selecting this statement and saying it to yourself. Keeping a written record reinforces the skill.

