# **#54 How to Accept the Unacceptable**

I started writing this a week ago standing in a voting line in West Chester, Pennsylvania. I still had a little bit of optimism that I might not have to record it the day after the election.

But here we are.

I have experience accepting seemingly unacceptable outcomes, including:

- Finding out my husband of twenty years cheated.
- Learning my fiancé was never going to survive his massive stroke.
- Being laid off after my company's owner spent \$28 million shooting himself up into space (that one was over twenty years ago).

And every time, those early days and weeks are rocky.

In the beginning of a big hit, loss, or change, you don't want to follow any cute "New Age" healing steps.

You just want to survive the shipwreck that has hit your life.

Normal self-care, like a massage or night out, is impossible in the early days. For one thing, you probably don't feel like leaving your house, and the idea of small talk with others is impossible. The loss and pain are so acute you can't imagine anything will help. And you may even feel guilty desiring any sort of relief

You just want to breathe normally again.

When facing a difficult outcome, it's natural to experience frustration, anger, and disappointment. And to go through the stages of death, including:

- Denial.
- Anger,
- Bargaining and
- Sadness.

If you are having these feelings, try to be curious about what they are trying to teach you. And talk with your therapist about them. If any of them lead to thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to your nearest emergency room or dial 988.

Understandably, as part of the stages above, you may question the part others play in your misery. If possible, please try to remember that no one took their actions to hurt you. They didn't die to hurt you, they didn't vote to harm you, they didn't even make decisions to lay you off to hurt you. They are acting out of their own needs and path and possibly suffering.

You are hurt, but rethinking the instinct to blame - or the belief that something was done to you - might alleviate some of that pain.

Even in my rawest, most tender states, I want to travel through the uglier parts of my being and get to the peaceful person as soon as possible. To do this, I find it helpful to lean on yoga and Buddhist philosophy so I can navigate these moments with some semblance of grace.

Here are six ways I have found helpful:

### 1. Self-Care

In the early days of pain, it is challenging to take care of ourselves. We forget to eat, exercise goes by the wayside, and sleep is unattainable. Focus on these areas in the beginning. Not eating or sleeping can hurt your ability to interact with others and make decisions.

Also, exercise should be considered a must because it increases the production of endorphins, which are brain chemicals that can improve mood and reduce pain.

In particular, walking in nature can help you remember that no situation, no matter its magnitude, is permanent. Visit a local park and look at the tallest and widest trees you can find. They have likely withstood every human tragedy – war, death, poverty - and survived.

Recently, I've been visiting the tree that my friends planted when my fiancé died. It reminds me of what is essential. The two of us had many small and big disagreements, but in the end, they were all a waste of time.

Life is too short to waste breath on anything but love, kindness, and peace. I just need to be of sound mind so I can remember that.

#### 2. Practice Non-Attachment

Buddhist teachings emphasize the importance of non-attachment to outcomes. This doesn't mean we ignore our values or remain passive; rather, we release our rigid expectations. If we have done all we can, we release the outcome.

And let the idea come into our minds that this is happening for our greatest good. That this loss, pain, and/or disappointment is here to teach us something (and maybe the world too).

Accepting what is, rather than what we wish it to be, fosters inner peace. Remind yourself that circumstances are constantly shifting, and the potential for change is always there.

# 3. Stop "Othering"

In times of difficulty, it's tempting to see others as adversaries. Buddhism teaches us to cultivate compassion, even for those we may disagree with.

One of my favorite mantras is, "Help people. And if we can't, do no harm."

This is helpful when we are in situations of profound disagreement. We may not be able to help those people. Instead, we have to decide to set a boundary to protect ourselves and do no harm to them.

And remember when dealing with people who voted or acted in ways you don't agree with – silence is always an option. As words, like actions, can never really be taken back.

This is difficult as emotions run high and our minds and fingers spin on our phones with visions of doom.

But we must imagine instead that we are all human. Each person acts from their own experiences, beliefs, and struggles.

Not everyone is working on the path of love.

So do no harm - the universe will provide.

And karma knows everyone's address.

## 4. Find Moments of Mindfulness and Inner Peace

When everything feels chaotic, turn inward. Meditation, yoga, and mindfulness practices can ground us in the present moment, helping us observe thoughts and emotions without judgment. We can build resilience regardless of external circumstances by focusing on what is within our control—our thoughts, actions, and reactions.

Do some basic stretches or simple movements, sit quietly, breathe deeply, and take a break from and release resentment or worry. Visit donnayferris.com/meditations for a dozen free meditations and yoga practices that can support you. One of the favorites these days is "Feel Angry or Anxious? This Meditations for You," which is also on the meditation app Insight Timer.

## 5. Convert the Energy into Creative or Constructive Action

In Buddhism, anger is considered a form of suffering that clouds the mind. Or, as one of my daughters said yesterday, "Don't drink the poison, Mom."

When anger and frustration arises, transform it into creative or constructive action rather than letting it fester. Ask yourself, "How can I respond in a way that aligns with my values?"

How can I bend glass in the heat of this moment rather than break it?

Supporting causes you care about or engaging in meaningful conversations may help. Connecting with others feeling the same way can also make us feel less alone. Creating through writing, art, cooking, or putting together a concert or podcast can transform our feelings into positive action in alignment with our principles. This brings us a sense of purpose and agency, while making the environment around us better.

# 6. Accept Impermanence and the Nature of Change

Everything is constantly in flux, and what feels unacceptable today may shift tomorrow. Change is inevitable, and all things—difficult and pleasant—are ultimately transient. Accepting impermanence can make finding peace with the present easier, knowing it won't last forever.

Use this acceptance as a reminder to approach each day with gratitude and curiosity for what may come.

Acceptance doesn't mean passive resignation but a profound openness to what life brings, even when it's undesirable. By rethinking what is happening and taking our pain and view out of the picture, we can find clarity, compassion, and courage in moments of deep uncertainty and perhaps inspire others to do the same.

We can do this.

As we try these strategies for accepting the unacceptable, remember that healing and resilience come in waves. Some days, you may feel steady, while others may pull you back into the deep dark. This is part of the process.

Give yourself grace for the hard days, and recognize that each step brings you closer to peace, no matter how small.

Thank you for joining me on this episode of *Bounce Back Stronger*. I hope you found comfort, hope, and perhaps a new perspective today.

Visit donnayferris.com or purchase my book Bounce Back Stronger – Finding Peace and Purpose No Matter What Happens for more resources, meditations, and past episodes with stories of resilience.

Until next time, take gentle care of yourself and remember that you do have the strength to face this seemingly unacceptable time.