

R.A.A.V.E.N

Now that you are building your awareness for the different parts that exist within your system, and you are using the Mindful Journaling skill to identify each part. Its time to start making changes to the way your system responds to the world around you. As you start to take the actions that are needed to do the work required, it is important to try to make these changes permanent, sooner rather than later. We do this, once again, with mindful imagery work, re-educating the part of your personality that needs guidance in your system. Using mindfulness skills gives you the opportunity to build your Self Awareness, and by now, hopefully, you have a good understanding for the stories in your system and the parts that get activated when the schema is triggered. But how do we change a story that has been present for a long time, and what is it that we need to say to make this change a permanent thing?

Noticing a shift within your thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations should engage the S.T.O.P skill, so you can Stop, Take a deep breath, and Observe what's happening in your system. Using the skills of mindful breathing and practicing your ability to Observe and Describe what is happening at this point is key. When you recognize a part is becoming dominant in your system, it is an opportunity to connect with it, rather than blending with it like you used to before. The primary reason for this is so you can educate it on what is actually happening, rather than letting it respond to the schema it's trying to react to, in an old familiar way. This also provides an opportunity for Self Compassion, empathy, and understanding by learning what it was that activated its necessity in your system. In order to do this, it is important that you defuse from this part, so you remain in control of your "bus". This will allow you to see the part, rather than be the part, and provide clarity to the reasons you are behaving in certain ways.

The R.A.A.V.E.N skill is designed to provide the narrative you need to re-educate the part of your personality that is activated by the schema. This part is probably just trying to survive the situation that it sees as being dangerous. Parts are usually activated with a purpose in mind, and at the time of their creation, every part of your personality had a job to do. It is usually the case that the Emotional Child parts of your personality, are stuck in a time when their job was needed, and they don't realize that they no longer need to do the thing they do, as that was then, and this is now. Following the steps of R.A.A.V.E.N, and completing the worksheet associated with it, will provide you with the narrative to use in your mindfulness practice, to re-educate the parts of your personality and bring them into the here and now.

When practiced on a regular basis, this new narrative will allow the part to let go of its desire to protect your vulnerable child with such all or nothing purpose, creating the possibility for you to finally Live the Life you Want to Live, and step into the new world you have created. Take some time to read through the steps listed below, then try to incorporate them into your daily mindful action plan. This will be difficult to do at first, but like anything worth doing, with practice it will become easier to do. Over time, you will begin to experience the benefits of this exercise, in particular when it comes to the area of unconditional self-acceptance.

Recognize and Acknowledge the Part that has Feelings:

The first step in this process is to recognize and acknowledge that there is a feeling, thought, or emotion you are experiencing as a result of the situation you are currently in. For some people, this is an easy thing to do. For others, this can be challenging. If you have been developing your Mindfulness Practice as a part of your Recovery Lifestyle, this will probably be an easier thing for you to identify, as it is part of the observing phase of the S.T.O.P Skill. Observing and Describing the part that is present in your system is the art of unblending, it allows you to Defuse from the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing in order to identify and name them simply as parts of your personality, nonjudgmentally Observing and Describing what's happening in your internal world.

Remember, if this emotional experience becomes too overwhelming for you, if it's not the right time or place to do this work, then it's ok to take a step back, go to your safe place, practice mindful breathing, and try again another time. If it is the right time and place, and you feel confident and safe to do the work, go ahead and name the part of your personality, non judgementally, that is present in your thoughts at this time. Acknowledge the emotion this part is holding onto by saying out loud, "I am noticing there is a part of me that is ..." it can also be helpful to look at the journal you completed earlier to get a perspective from the point of view that this part has, as this will assist you in getting to know this part of your personality and increase your chances of unblending from it when it tries to, metaphorically speaking, drive your bus.

Appreciate the purpose of part that is having these thoughts and feelings:

Once you have recognized and acknowledged the thought, feeling, or emotion, and then named the part of your personality attached to this internal experience, the next step is to appreciate why the part does what it does. This will lead you towards the unconditional acceptance of this part, and its behaviour, which is an essential piece of the long-term process, as we have to work from a space of "no bad parts." It's important to understand that this is not about the part being right or wrong, good or bad, just simply that it's there, it is not possible for you to get rid of this part as it is an important part of you and your personality system, as are each and every one of your parts. It is simply about understanding the intent behind the parts behaviour. What is its purpose in your system, and why does it react the way it reacts?

At the time this part was created, it must've served a purpose, the behaviour it uses to cope with the feeling was an appropriate behaviour at some point in the past. See if you can empathise with why the part behaves this when you're emotionally activated. Ask yourself, "what is this part trying to protect me from?" sit with the behaviour and see if it is connected to behaviours from the past, and empathise with the child at that time, trying to deal with the situation the only way they know how, in a space that was probably filled with fear. Bring compassionate conversation to your system, so you can authentically understand the purpose of this part.

I want to point out that in order to work with, and accept this emotional state of being, there has to be a willingness to step into the possibility of uncomfortable feelings. To sit with these feelings and experience them, but not to sit in them to the point that they consume you, take control of your system, and start driving the bus that is you. Acceptance is a huge part of any recovery lifestyle, as we are working towards the goal of unconditional acceptance of self, life, and others

at all times. Many people struggle with acceptance as a concept, so it can be very difficult to put into practice.

Validate the part of you that's holding the emotion:

The next step is probably the most important part of this process, simply because it is the one that is almost always lacking. Learning the skill of self-validation is a key component to developing a healthy relationship with the many different parts of your personality, and ultimately getting comfortable within your own skin. Self-validation takes us into, and from, our ability to practice the skills of self-empathy and self-compassion, both of which are also essential in the journey towards unconditional self-acceptance. Usually, without self-validation, we obsessively seek our validation from others. This is one of the ways we try to fill an internal void with external resources (AKA The PIG), and when we do not receive the external validation that we're looking for, it leaves us feeling empty, worthless, helpless, or unlovable in some way.

Validation does not mean we praise the part for the behaviour we are trying to work with or change, it simply means we understand why the part wants to behave this way, why it feels the way it does, and how it came to the point in time where it believes that this is the only option you have to deal with the situation you are facing. Sometimes self-validation can be as simple as saying "I completely understand why you feel the way you do", and other times it can be a little more complex. Remember, the validation has to come from a place of sincerity and authenticity as a result of using compassion and empathy to understand why this part is doing what it does. A lack of authenticity will lead to your system feeling manipulated which will often cause an issue with Self trust, so please don't skip over this practice, or use the words to tick the proverbial box of completion, this will only keep you stuck if you do. Whichever way you find works for validation, start by letting the part you're working with know that you understand why it feels the way it does, given the things you have experienced and the tools you previously had at your disposal, then see where that leads you.

Educate the part the part:

Once you believe that the self-validation is complete, you will sense that the part you are working with feels safe and accepted in your system, the next step in the process is to educate the part about the current situation. We do this by literally speaking directly to this part of your personality, either in your thoughts or out loud, either way works, it's about figuring out which way works for you. Educate the part about the situation you are in, let it know how you are aware of the problems of the past, but you are older now. Let it know that you have the skills you now have to deal with the situation, and if necessary, list them out so there is complete awareness in your system for what you can do.

Often, these parts of your personality will be trapped in an emotional time from your past, so spending some time letting them know where you are, how you are not in any danger, will be all that is needed to bring peace to your system. If its just an emotion that you are noticing as a "problem", and there is no external action that is needed, let the part know that you can handle your feelings now, that they are not a "problem", and emotions don't have to overwhelm you if you don't want them too. This is often challenging to do at first, and will probably feel a little strange, as it's not something we are used to doing, but the more you practice the easier this will become,

and the more effective the skill will be for you. This is the process of re-educating, and the words are words of a Healthy Adult, Good Parent, that's trying to teach an emotional child how to do things in a way that will promote emotional growth. Many parts of your personality system are not used to this type of communication, so you may feel like giving up and walking away at times. Try to stick with it and return to the first step in the process if you are finding it difficult to stay on track.

Negotiate with the part.

The final step in this exercise is to negotiation with the part to create a committed action moving forward. This action may be internal or external, depending on the situation, but it is important to create one regardless of the circumstance. The committed action you take is a symbol of growth, it allows us to create something new and grow with each new achievement. It is ALL about meeting the unmet childhood need, what is it that this part of you is protecting, what is it that your system needs. Remember, achievement doesn't mean you stop doing what you're doing, it's just another stop on the journey of your life, we continue going in the same direction, regardless of the achievements we have along the way. Creating and carrying out a committed action is also an opportunity to acknowledge progress, give yourself the proverbial pat on the back, which is the only way to develop continued *internal* motivation.

Negotiating with the part may be simple at times, creating a plan to physically do something to bring you back in line with your values and beliefs, or asking an emotion to soften off while you complete your current task. However, sometimes it may be a little more complicated, particularly if you are feeling the emotional reaction begin to overwhelm your system. If this is the case, take a step back and bring the DBT S.T.O.P skill back into play. Try going to your safe place again or using the skills of mindful breathing to bring you back into the current moment. Once you feel that you are ready, go back to the beginning and start the process again, with practice this will begin to get easier, only with practice will this become a valuable tool for your emotional wellbeing.

On the following page is an example of what the R.A.A.V.E.N narrative can look like, use your mindful journal to highlight specific parts of your personality that require re-educating on the stories they are attached to, and create your own mindful meditation, specific to the needs of your system. Use this narrative every day, whenever you notice this part present in your internal space, and make it part of your morning and night routine to increase the probability of it landing with the part that's in need of re-educating. Imagery visualization is key to making changes, especially making them permanent, so take your time and notice any unrelenting standard you may have about how fast this is supposed to work, as that will only hinder the process, making it slower overall.

If you are completing this exercise in conjunction with the online classes, use the guided meditation to support you in this process. If you are completing this on your own, use the skills of mindful breathing, and access your Wise Mind as we discussed previously, to get into the meditative state required to complete the re-educating process every day. Remember, your parts have spent a long time doing what they do, so it will take a while to re-educate them. Pushback and resistance is expected, so treat it with compassion and curiosity, not judgment and rigidity, as this will only create the behavioural chaos you are trying to avoid.

R.A.A.V.E.N Worksheet Example

Recognize and Acknowledge:

I am noticing that there is a part of me that's...
feeling really angry about being at the party and having to tell people over and over again that I didn't want to drink!
I hear you; I see you.

Appreciate and Accept:

I appreciate you because you...
are trying to protect me from the people who are crossing my boundaries, you believe I am in a dangerous situation, and you are trying to keep me safe.
Thank you, I appreciate the fact that you are doing this for me.

Validate:

I completely understand why this is because...
I value respect, I value honesty, and I value integrity, and the way my friends are pushing me right now is not cool at all, it is really disrespectful and bordering on bullying.
It's totally ok that you feel this way and there is absolutely nothing wrong with your emotions.

Educate:

In actuality, what's happening is...
I have a story of shame that's activate in my system, and my vulnerable child is under threat, right now, this threat is not at a level that requires this kind of reaction, AND it's completely understandable that he is reacting that way.

Negotiate

Moving forward...
I would like to take a deep breath before I react, use my tools to deactivate my fight or flight system by focussing on my breath, and use the STOP skill to help me get through this situation.

R.A.A.V.E.N Worksheet

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I am noticing that there is a part of me that's...

I hear you, I see you.

Appreciate and Accept:

I appreciate you because you...

Thank you, I appreciate the fact that you are doing this for me.

Validate:

I completely understand why this is because...

It's totally ok that you feel this way and there is absolutely nothing wrong with your emotions.

Educate:

In actuality, what's happening is...

Negotiate

Moving forward...