



Workload-Related Overwhelm Activity

When our workload is overwhelming, we can experience burnout. Burnout can lead us to feeling stuck. One way through this stuckness is called “taking the middle path.” Taking the middle path means both accepting the facts of our work situation as they are, and at the same time, making changes (even small ones) where possible to improve our situation.

Part 1: Acceptance

Acceptance is the act of acknowledging the facts of our situation without resisting them. *Non-acceptance* means resisting the facts of our situation. Resistance can take many forms, like denying, ignoring, or judging our overwhelming work situation, complaining, insisting that reality shouldn't be as it is, or ruminating.

The costs of non-acceptance

Non-acceptance can take a toll on our well-being by increasing tension, worry, frustration, or other difficult emotions. Non-acceptance can also use up significant time and energy we might rather spend on hobbies, interests, or relationships.

How might non-acceptance of your work situation be taking a toll on you?

Example:

- *I'm not accepting when I: worry about work during dinnertime.*
- *How non-acceptance affects me: I feel distracted while at the table with loved ones, I miss out on our conversation, and my muscles are tight.*

Now, it's your turn. Try to think of a few examples below.

I'm not accepting when I: _____

How non-acceptance affects me: _____

Continue on next page...

I'm not accepting when I: _____

How non-acceptance affects me: _____

How acceptance of our current situation helps

Non-acceptance can take a toll on our well-being by increasing tension, worry, frustration, or other difficult emotions. Non-acceptance can also use up significant time and energy we might rather spend on hobbies, interests, or relationships.

Practicing acceptance with "willing hands"

The "willing hands" exercise involves assuming an open physical posture to help us accept what's happening.

Willing hands steps

- Sit comfortably with your eyes closed or resting on an object nearby.
- Place your hands on your lap or at your sides.
- Turn your palms upward as if your hands are receiving, and let your fingers relax.
- Hold this posture for 1-2 minutes, and invite your breath and body to settle.
- Notice your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations. How does it feel to open your palms and "receive" this moment?
- Reflect on how you might use willing hands to cope with burnout.

Continue on next page...

Tracking your practice

Consider tracking your practice of willing hands (or another acceptance exercise). Note how you feel before and after trying acceptance. Also note any thoughts, feelings or other reactions that come up during or after the practice. (Log is provided on the next page.)

Date	Your distress level before the coping strategy scale of 1-5 (1 = least distressed, 5 = most distressed)	Acceptance practice used (willing hands, or write other exercise or practice here)	Your distress level after the coping strategy from 1 to 5 scale of 1 to 5 (1 = least distressed, 5 = most distressed)	Reflection comments What thoughts, feelings, or reactions arose? Would you try anything differently next time?
<i>Monday, 2/12</i>	3	<i>Willing hands</i>	2	<i>I heaved a sigh of relief after. I might try it for longer.</i>

example

Continue on next page...

Part 2: Making changes

While accepting our work situation, we may see opportunities to make changes (even small ones) that could help lower burnout. Ideas are offered below as starting points:

- Do only what's necessary (while burned out).
- Ask co-workers for help.
- Ask management for change.
- Seek co-workers' support.

Brainstorming changes

What changes could you make (even small ones) to your work situation to lower your burnout? Brainstorm below. Consider changes you could make at your workplace, as well as changes you could make at home or during your commute that might lower burnout.

There are no bad or wrong ideas during this brainstorm process—any ideas are encouraged here, and may fuel your problem-solving process!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Continue on next page...

Planning for change

Pick 2-3 change ideas from the brainstorm above. Below, start making plans for how you could implement these change ideas. It helps to make these plans as specific as possible, including when you will try the change, where, with whom, etc. You are welcome to plan for more than 2-3 ideas, if you choose, using the space below or another sheet of paper.

1. **Idea:** _____

How (when, where, etc.) I could make this change: _____

2. **Idea:** _____

How (when, where, etc.) I could make this change: _____

3. **Idea:** _____

How (when, where, etc.) I could make this change: _____

Continue on next page...

Part 3: Three good things

Bringing to mind good things about our work can also help us lower burnout. At the end of each week, consider reflecting on three good things about your work situation and writing them below. You can look back at this list whenever you need a mood-booster or a change in perspective.

Date	Three good things
<i>Week 1</i> <i>Date: Fri, 1/5</i> <i>example</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>My co-worker and I laughed hard at a funny meme.</i>2. <i>A customer said I was really kind and gave me an extra big tip.</i>3. <i>I saw a beautiful sunset during my commute home.</i>
Week 1 Date:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.
Week 2 Date:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.
Week 3 Date:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.
Week 4 Date:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.

