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How to Tolerate Frustration

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Just like all other creature, we humans avoid unpleasant activities. Standing in lines, doing tedious work, and feeling anxious, are some of the circumstances we prefer to dodge. But life is full of situations that require you to tolerate frustration, and preparing for public speaking is the one of them.

Frustration tolerance is a term that describes the level of our ability to withstand frustrating situations and states. Low frustration tolerance (LFT) leads us to seek immediate pleasure, rather than work for long-term satisfaction, if that would require discomfort, stamina, and being frustrated. A person with LFT tends to underestimate their own ability to overcome unpleasantness, while overestimating the negative aspects of a situation or event. Cognitive distortions are largely why people develop and maintain LFT.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center. Below it, three quiz cards are displayed in a row. Each card has a white border and a central image. The first card shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, with the text 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2' below. The second card shows a fan of colorful pencils, also with 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2' below. The third card shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, with 'Quiz: Flags in Europe' below. To the right of the cards is a red button with white text that says 'See all quizzes =>'.

How Does LFT Feel?

“I’ll never be prepared enough, the fear will overpower me, and I should quit before I embarrass myself in front of everyone.”, or, “Working on my fear and preparing for public speaking is hard, exhausting and boring. I can’t do this.” – these are examples of how LFT can distort your perception of public speaking.

What Does LFT Look Like?

On a behavioral level, this person may procrastinate, or decide to leave everything as it is, without making an effort to improve upon the circumstances, because he or she perceives changing something as impossible or too difficult. In this way, the individual avoids stress, anxiety, and being exposed to events that can trigger these states. However, seeking short-term pleasure and avoiding difficulties, even when the effort will be beneficial in the long run, can lead to undesirable consequences down the road. People with LFT may start to feel defeated by life, their self-esteem may suffer, resulting in chronic stress and anxiety, and they may struggle with a constant lack of vitality.

Could It Be Different?

On the other hand, a person with high frustration tolerance (HFT) is aware that pursuing a goal may have its challenges and difficulties. He or she can tolerate discomfort, and negative experiences in general, in order to achieve a greater goal.

Difficulty Is Not an Obstacle

A person with HFT knows that public speaking is hard, and sometimes even aggravating. However, that individual is willing and motivated to engage in activities, such as working on their automatic thoughts, and other techniques for coping with anxiety, with the full realization that those activities would often be difficult to bare. However, HFT does not mean that you are not stressed or challenged by the situation. Instead, it relates to the conscious choice to do what is needed, in order to accomplish a goal - in this case, to become a better public speaker.

Are You Born That Way?

Tolerance frustration is something we develop over the course of our lives, and is influenced by our environment, interactions, and core beliefs. Luckily, it is not a genetic trait, such as having curly or straight hair. Therefore, we can develop our frustration tolerance. It's not unchangeable, inherited trait we are born with (or without). We can learn how to resist the urge for immediate satisfaction, in order to accomplish an important goal, or become better human beings.

How Can You Develop HFT?

The most vital aspect of frustration tolerance is that it influences our daily lives. We make choices and decisions based on what we feel, need to and should do. However, the fact that we are constantly faced with choices is also the key to change – every day, you can choose if you want to have high or low frustration tolerance. Relying on what we want at the moment may lead us to low frustration tolerance because, in this way, we are driven by our immediate desires. On the other hand, if we decide to focus on our values, on what we have to do to accomplish a goal, even if it requires engaging in activities that are challenging, unpleasant or painful, that's a brilliant way to develop our frustration tolerance. You can look at it as the

difference between seeing the big picture, or becoming so fixating on a single brush stroke, that you cannot see the entire canvas.

Is Your Fun Over?

Of course that doesn't mean that you should never follow your desires or be spontaneous. Everyone needs to let loose sometimes, and that doesn't mean you have a low frustration tolerance. The key is to create a balance, and inspire ourselves to achieve difficult goals, even if that sometimes means sacrificing the desire for immediate gratification. It is a good idea to put things in perspective, weigh their significance, and prioritize them.

You Choose Constantly

Almost everything you do is a choice that shapes your life over time, even if you are not aware of it. Each time you sit in front of your computer to work, you are making a choice. Each time you get bored with it and decide to do something else - to clean your desk, to water your plant - you are making a choice. You choose not to work and have an excellent excuse - your desk is a mess, and your plant is barely alive. Even if these are problems you should solve, you felt the urge to act on them in a time that was not appropriate. In other words, you are acting upon your low frustration tolerance, by procrastinating and avoiding a task, which is perhaps boring, but needs to be done. Having high frustration tolerance implies that you finish your work and then clean up your desk or try to resurrect your plant.

How to Stop Procrastinating

Preparing your presentation can be one of these high-demand tasks. By following the simple steps listed below, you will allow yourself to discontinue rushing after every sudden urge, rather than creating a good presentation.

Create a Plan and Stick To It

For example, today you intended to create half of your presentation. Estimate how much time you'll need and include some time for taking brief breaks. If you need three hours for half of your presentation, plan a short 5-minute break after each 30 minutes of work. Remember not to create grand, unrealistic plans, because then you'd only increase your frustration. Instead, make sure you have challenging, yet doable goals.

Record Your Progress

As you take your breaks, write down your impressions and consider the obstacles before you, that you find most challenging. If you feel the need to procrastinate, write it down and then get back to work. Observe your desires mindfully, let them be present and then choose your response.

Repeat

You can divide each of your tasks into smaller portions and create a separate plan for each one. Use your previous notes to track your progress and see if your frustrations change in a while. For example, yesterday you couldn't resist the urge to check your Facebook within your

30-minute work period, do your best today to have at least an hour without social media. With each repetition, you'll notice progress and realize how it's all about the choices we make. So make them wisely.

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