Passive vs. Active Acceptance

Many people assume that acceptance means they have to passively allow anything that comes their way without making any attempt to respond to it. Passive acceptance would be responding to all of life like a spineless jellyfish. Here are some examples:

- You get sick but refuse to see a doctor or take medicine, yet you feel depressed about being sick.
- You lose your job and ignore mounting bills, but you don’t look for a new job.
- You hate the way you look, so you stop caring about your hair, clothing, weight, and makeup and just let yourself go.
- You tolerate unacceptable things in your relationships and make no attempt to hold the other person accountable while complaining about how you are treated.
- You have no goals to better your life but complain you are not happy.

Active acceptance responds to life in a productive way with a backbone. Here are some examples:

- You see a doctor, take medicine, and pray for healing.
- You adjust your spending downward while looking for a job.
- You maximize your looks but accept the things about yourself that you can’t change.
- You accept the things about people you can’t change, but you continue to seek a better relationship with them by speaking the truth in love and setting boundaries.
- You set reasonable goals to improve your life and work toward them.

The goal of active acceptance is to accept your circumstances and then adjust to them by doing what you can to make them better. It is different than passive acceptance which just accepts without making an attempt to respond. We are always responsible to do our part no matter what comes our way—then after we have done all we can, we surrender to the things we cannot change.

By Karla Downing
 Relationship Prayer

God,

Help me to discern the difference between active and passive acceptance.

 Relationship Challenge

    ❖ Identify one thing you do not like in your life, accept it as it is, and then take the responsibility for doing your part to respond proactively to it.

 Scripture Meditation

Acts 22:22-30

“As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, ‘Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?’”

Paul was arrested many times. He resigned himself to suffering for the gospel and was willing to die for it, yet when he was arrested, he didn’t hesitate to exercise his rights as a Roman citizen and ask for his rightful release. There were other times when he was beaten or had to stay in prison that he adjusted by actively accepting the reality of his circumstances and surrendering to God’s will while looking for ways to minister to others and grow closer to God in the midst of his imprisonment.

 If you have any questions you would like to ask Karla, please feel free to e-mail her. Portions of your e-mail and Karla's response to you may be used anonymously in future materials. By e-mailing her, you are giving your implied permission.

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