“Act as if” is a powerful concept. It allows you to be who you want to be by acting how you want to act even when your feelings don’t agree with your actions. That might not sound healthy to you, but it is when used in the right way. You have a picture of how you would act and react in your relationships if you were perfectly healthy and balanced. If you were to put into action all of the tips and truths you get in my newsletters, you would probably be doing things that you know are right, but just seem too difficult to implement at this time. Now, if you could act like you are that person, how cool would that be?

“Acting as if” takes self-control and self-discipline. You will need to contain your emotions and doubts and choose instead how you want to talk, respond, act, and live. Here are some examples:

❖ You picture how you would act if you were totally detached from the difficult person’s moods, anger, blame, and threats. Then you act like you are detached and do what you would do if you were, even though you are still reacting like the old you inside.

❖ You act as if you are strong when you feel weak and scared. When are you scared? When you are setting a boundary you know is right but you are afraid to set because you know the person might not do what you have asked, and you will have to follow through with painful consequences.

❖ You say your truth confidently and hold to it, as if you don’t have any self-doubt. Difficult people easily make you doubt yourself if you let them. If you show any sign of weakness with your stand, they will use it to pressure you to back down and to question your truth. Speak strongly, don’t waiver, and don’t defend your truth. Your truth doesn’t have to be explained or defended.

❖ You act as if you enjoy doing things with which you keep yourself busy, even though your mind is still obsessing on someone whose behavior is making you afraid, angry, or sad. Instead of trying to figure things out so you can fix the person’s problems and change him/her to make yourself feel better, you go on living your own life.
You act as if someone who is used to pushing your buttons no longer is able to push them. You react calmly, you take care of yourself, you change the subject, or you simply say what you would say if the person wasn’t getting to you.

The benefit of “acting as if” is that you are making choices that are healthy rather than continuing in unhealthy choices. You are choosing to act how you want to be rather than letting your emotions and unhealthy habits dictate how you are.

What is the real benefit of “acting as if”? When you practice healthy behavior, eventually it begins to feel normal and your emotions match your actions. Before you know it, you won’t be “acting.” Instead, you will just be doing what comes natural.

By Karla Downing

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Relationship Prayer

God,

Help me to clearly picture how I would be as a healthy person in my relationships. Help me to “act as if” until those behaviors become automatic.

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Relationship Challenge

- What relationship truth do you want to put into practice in your life?
- How would you act as if that were really you?
- Purpose to “act as if” that is your automatic behavior. Make sure you follow through and continue acting as if until it becomes normal.

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Scripture Meditation

I Corinthians 9:24-27

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Use your ability to choose how to act to train yourself how to act automatically.

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If you have any questions you would like to ask Karla, please feel free to email her at karla@changemyrelationship.com.

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