

WELL BEING

SUMMER 2022

INDIVIDUALITY

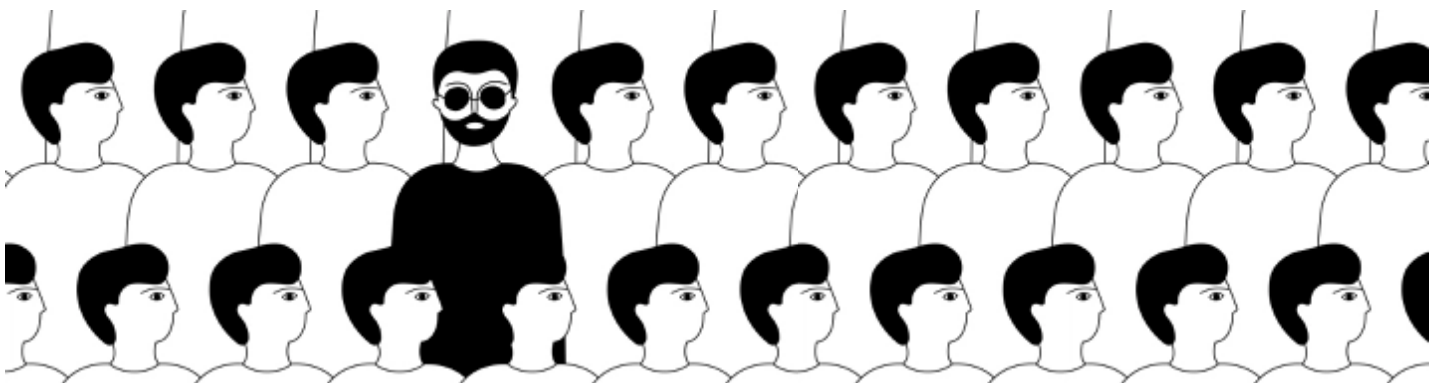
Definition:

1. The quality or character of a particular person or thing that distinguishes them from others of the same kind, especially when strongly marked.
2. Separate existence.

In a world filled with expectations, the rise of the internet/social media and school or friendship pressures, individuality can be hard. We're so easily influenced by our peers and environment that sometimes it can just be easier to blend into the background and follow convention. Yet in doing so, we lose a part of our identity. The world is filled with people from all walks of life and not one of us is the same; if that were the case, life would be extremely dull. Therefore, individuality and standing out from the crowd shouldn't be something that's hushed or swept under the rug, in fact, it should be encouraged. Do what makes you feel happy whether that's playing sports, binge-watching your favourite series, photography, baking, dancing, anything. It doesn't matter if other people think that the clothes you wear are odd or whether your favourite style of music is the complete opposite to your friends - we all have something that makes us different, that makes us special. Sharing our differences and experiences with others is important not just for instilling confidence in ourselves but our peers as well.

What are the benefits?

1. Increased productivity and innovation: Individualist cultures are more likely to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, both at home and in the workplace.
2. Greater self-concept: Individualism is linked with a healthy sense of self-concept – an internalised concept regarding one's personal identity, strengths and abilities. What is important to the individual, and believes in their own self-worth.
3. Greater autonomy: Individualism means an increased level of autonomy in the work context, where people are much less likely to be led by managers or the majority view of society as a whole.



Trying something new can also be a great way to find your tribe and build confidence in yourself and your interests. Why not try...

- A new sport
- A different style of music, film or book that you've not considered before
- Baking/cooking a new recipe
- Taking up a musical instrument (or a new one)
- Sewing
- Crafts
- Meditation
- Visiting a new place
- Learning a new language or about a new culture

Don't be afraid to embrace that spark of individuality and don't worry about straying from other's ideals. Do what makes you feel content. Be bold, be confident, be yourself.

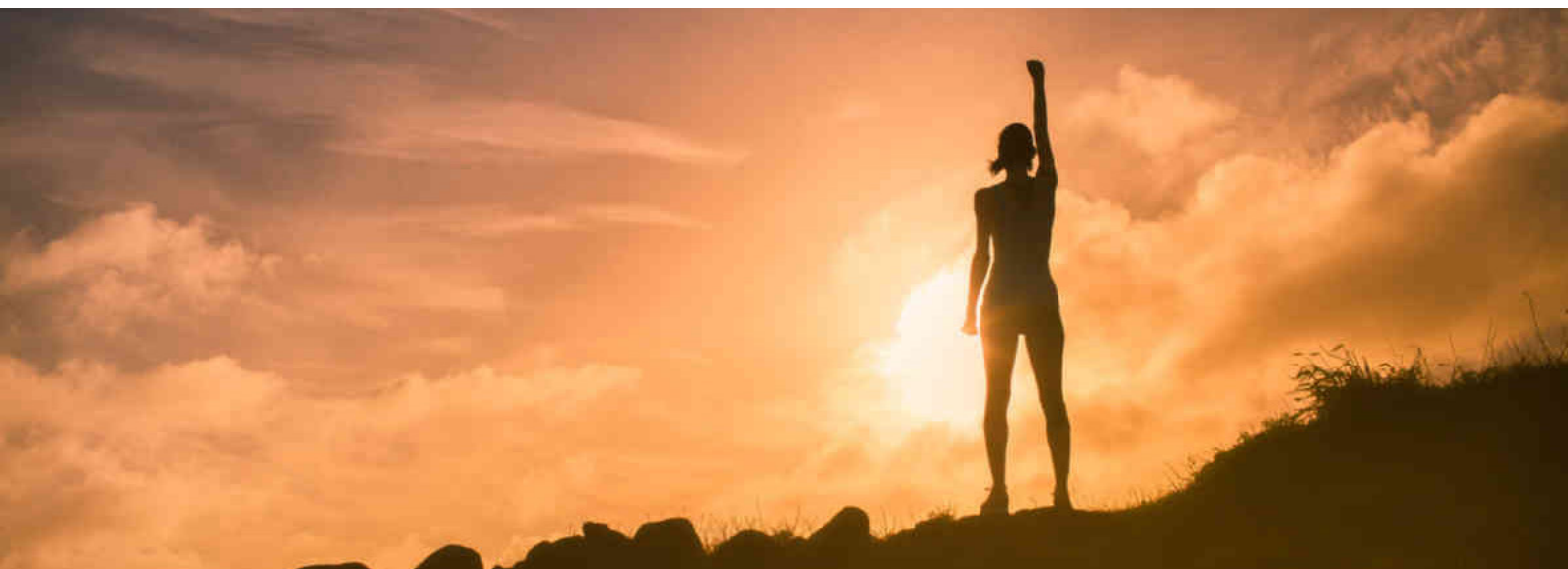
Coping: Acceptance, not Resistance

Life is full of pain. But most of us are never taught how to acknowledge this, let alone to effectively face and experience it. Because of this, despite having the very best of intentions, we tend to respond to pain in ways that backfire and turn it into suffering. A common response is to resist the pain. We pretend that everything is fine, even though we are despairing within. We suppress our emotions, deny our needs, or reject our authentic responses to events. We apply judgments to events, like "This should not be happening," "This is bad," or "I shouldn't be feeling this way." Resisting makes the pain bigger, stronger, and more intractable. It adds a layer of suffering on top of the pain, keeping us stuck in narratives about ourselves and the world, and trapped in emotions like despair, anger, shame, and unhappiness.

There are many ways to resist reality.

We resist ourselves as we are by rejecting our authentic selves, comparing ourselves to others, and holding ourselves up to an impossible standard. We resist our emotions, labouring under the belief that we are not supposed to feel pain, struggle, or experience the full range of human emotions. We use phrases like "I shouldn't feel this way" or "I shouldn't find this so challenging." We resist other people as they are, wanting them to be different, weaving tales about how if they would only just change, our lives would improve forever. And we resist the world as it is. We want things to be different from what they are. We want our loved ones to not be sick, we want a shorter commute, we want the past to be different from what it was. All of these desires are completely normal and acceptable. However, resistance does not change it. It only leads to suffering.

The antidote for resistance is acceptance. When we accept reality for what it is - especially when that reality is something that we desperately do not want to be true - we give ourselves the gift of peace and freedom. From this place of acceptance, we can also change what is within our control: learning how to live with it, healing from it, making it better, and using its lessons to help us help others. To accept something does not mean that you approve of it. It means that you are committed to no longer spending your energy fighting its existence. In making this decision, we allow the pain to run its course. We free ourselves up to see a bigger picture beyond the immediate challenge. And we can move past the experience, learning from it and letting it go, in order to find peace and freedom.



To move from resistance to acceptance, try taking these steps:

- **Acknowledge what you are resisting**

What element of reality are you fighting right now: yourself, your emotions, another person, an event or experience? Write it down and acknowledge it, and bring your attention to how this resistance is creating more pain and suffering for you.

- **Give yourself space to feel your emotions**

If you have been resisting, you have likely been suppressing or denying your emotions. Try journaling, talking to a friend, or working with a therapist. In allowing yourself to bring these to the surface and feel them, you create the possibility for peace. It's like a thunderstorm: the lightning, thunder, and rain have to happen, to wash away the chaos and welcome in the sense of renewal.

- **Act as if**

Acceptance is such a radical departure from the resistance that we often do not know how to behave. Imagine a version of yourself who has completely accepted reality for what it is. What would this self do in this moment? Keep that avatar close, checking in to help you steadily choose responses in line with your commitment to acceptance.

- **Recognise that pain is part of life**

As Dr Marsha Linehan says, "Life can be worth living even with painful events in it." In accepting this deep truth, we can welcome a greater sense of peace and self-acceptance. There is nothing wrong with us. We are simply doing our very best.

10 WAYS TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

-  **Talk about your feelings**
-  **Keep active**
-  **Eat well**
-  **Take a break**
-  **Drink sensibly**
-  **Keep in touch**
-  **Do something you're good at**
-  **Accept who you are**
-  **Ask for help**
-  **Care for others**

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