

EMBRACE PROBLEMS AND DANCE WITH THEM

As an alternative to the eight strategies for keeping problems, consider some ways to embrace problems—and even dance with them—as steps toward releasing them.

The words *dance* and *embrace* might seem strange when talking about problems. Keep in mind that embracing or dancing with a problem does not mean seeking it out. Most of us already have more than enough trouble on hand without looking for more. Instead, this strategy suggests steps we can take when problems show up naturally.

Tell the truth

Embracing problems begins with telling the truth. This allows us to go to the heart of a problem without getting distracted or sidetracked. Usually, the most direct approach to a problem is to walk up to it and shake hands.

For example, if the truth is that we are afraid to speak in public, then we can start by admitting it. That simple truth can stand alone without evaluation, blame, justification, excuse, rationalization, or explanation. It can take on the status of a simple fact: Rocks are hard, water is wet, and we are afraid to speak in public.

Naturally, our feelings about public speaking are probably more charged than our feelings about rocks. Even so, we can tell the simple, factual truth about our fear.

Embrace problems

We can know that we're embracing a problem when we experience it and still feel reasonably comfortable.

It's unrealistic to expect that we'll feel comfortable with every problem we face. We can have happy, satisfying lives and still experience occasional fear, anger, upset, and frustration. The key is to not let our reactions reduce us to inaction or render us ineffective.

Here comes a tricky part: Embracing something does not necessarily mean agreeing with it. We can accept another person's statement of a problem, understand it, and even be relatively comfortable around it—all while disagreeing with that statement.

Move even closer

Standing squarely in front of our problems sometimes requires the courage to feel discomfort. Our unwillingness to deal with unpleasant feelings might tempt us to choose one of the eight ways to keep problems.

When that happens, we can face our discomfort and move in even closer. Even after telling the truth, we can observe in detail how the problem shows up, moment by moment, in our daily lives.

You can begin by paying close attention to physical sensations. When you feel fear, for example, you might experience sweaty palms, shortness of breath, dizziness, shaking knees, chest pains, nausea, or a host of other physical events. Greeting these sensations with nonjudgmental attention often decreases the discomfort.

Take the first step in the dance

Sometimes embracing a problem is all that's needed to solve it. More often, this is just the first step in a more intricate dance—the strategies we use to eventually resolve the problem.

Our dance might include any of the Success Strategies described in this book. We can design and implement practical action plans to deal with our problems. If problems don't respond to our best efforts, then we can choose to seek help from a professional counselor.

