

The Awareness, Acceptance, and Choice (AAC) Pattern

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When potential clients ask me how life coaching works, I talk about becoming aware of ourselves, our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. I also tell them they will learn the skill of acceptance versus judgment and ultimately the ability to choose their own destiny in all aspects of their lives. I find that the pattern of awareness, acceptance, and choice is one that works both for life changes and also as a pattern that clients can turn to at any time.

Awareness is the first step. Through non-judgmental and open-ended questions, I help my clients become aware of their own thought process, their feelings, and how they show up in life. The awareness step can often be very painful for clients because they realize that they've often been at the cause of their own unhappiness and lack of success. What frequently happens when they become aware is that they may become very angry and judgmental of themselves.

This judgment leads to the second step of the AAC pattern—Acceptance. By helping my clients to accept themselves, their past, and the patterns they've developed, it allows them to shift from catabolic to anabolic energy. They release judgment and can look to the opportunities for change in front of them. Without releasing the judgment clients are often unhappy and stuck in a cycle of self-sabotage. Acceptance allows them to believe there are no mistakes and everything in their past is an opportunity for growth in the future.

The final step of the AAC pattern is Choice. Once clients have awareness and have acceptance of their own history, they are ready to choose the life they want to lead. I help my clients realize they have choice in everything they do. They can either choose to do something differently or choose to look at the situation differently. Let's say a client doesn't like their job but they are not able to leave it at this time. In life coaching I help them see that they get to choose both how they think about and how they feel about that job. By changing their thoughts and feelings clients can show up and behave differently at that job. This can also lead to them enjoying the job more than they ever thought possible.

Once clients get the concept of choice they realize they can utilize it in every aspect of their lives. Knowing we can always live in choice is both empowering and satisfying. It means we can handle any situation that comes our way, and we are always in a place of power and ownership.

When we think about the cycle of a coaching relationship, utilizing the **awareness, acceptance, and choice** model allows us to help our clients become more conscious, less judgmental, and to fully own their future. Often, I have my clients utilize these three steps as homework assignments. Sometimes they will write down components of awareness as they are happening. They can choose to do this either in a written or digital journal. I have them practice acceptance by utilizing "I am" statements of empowerment and positivity. Finally, I have them think about what their choices are in any given situation and then consciously choose the one that will be the most beneficial.

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