

*"Does it work? Heck yes. It's highly effective"*

Evening Standard

# What Is, Is!

THE POWER OF  
POSITIVE ACCEPTANCE

a new way of  
thinking that will  
**transform** your life

*by psychologist*

**GRAHAM W PRICE**

Are you ...

- **Getting all you want out of life?**
- **Achieving everything you want to achieve?**
- **Completely free of stress, regret and worry?**
- **Loving your work?**
- **Enjoying satisfying relationships?**
- **Waking up every morning looking forward to the day?**
- **Being as successful as you want to be?**
- **Feeling happy and confident within yourself?**
- **Making whatever difference in the world you'd like to make?**
- **Looking forward to the future?**
- **Able to choose the way you experience every challenging moment?**

If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, this book is for you.

If you answered 'yes' to all the questions, read it anyway. It will help you encourage your friends, relations, colleagues and others to start living the exceptional life you're already enjoying.

# About the author

**Graham W Price** is a psychologist, therapist, stress-management consultant, personal and executive coach, relationships counsellor, personal development trainer and professional speaker.

He is the developer of Acceptance-Action Therapy (AAT), Acceptance-Action Training, the techniques of Positive Acceptance and the Pacceptance Principle.

He has helped thousands to dramatically improve their lives through his unique 'Acceptance-Action Training' and his work with individuals, couples and groups. His training is widely recognised as a revolutionary and highly effective approach to personal development, producing enhanced effectiveness, well-being, stress resilience, achievement, motivation and relationships.

Previously a general manager in one of the world's largest and most successful companies, he left the corporate world to introduce others to the ideas, tools and techniques that had substantially enhanced his own career and life.

Now a respected psychologist, he has fulfilled all his goals except one .... giving access to these ideas to everyone. This book has been written to meet that goal.

# Preface

I've written this book with one purpose in mind, to pass on to others ways of thinking and acting that have made a huge difference to my life and the lives of thousands of others I've been privileged to be able to help and train.

My work as a therapist, coach, trainer and speaker can only reach limited numbers. It's my hope this book will be able to influence many more lives for the better.

The pages that follow outline ways of thinking that are very different from the ways most of us have learned to think. Some of the ideas may initially seem foreign and to some even radical. It's my heart-felt wish that I've been able to convey them in a way that will dramatically influence readers' lives for the better.

You'll need to play your part by keeping an open mind and a willingness to try new ways of thinking. Do this and the tools and techniques outlined in this book will open the door to an extraordinary life.

I'd like to thank all who've spent time reviewing the book and providing valuable input to enhance the clarity of the message it contains.

**Graham W Price**  
**BPS, BABCP, UKCP, HPC, BACP, MBA, MSc**

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# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought what an ideal life might look and feel like? If you were looking back at your life in your old age, what would it need to have been like for you to be able to say “I made the most of it; it’s been amazing”?

Would it entail being able to answer ‘yes’ to the questions asked at the beginning of this book? Perhaps for you it would need to include something more. Whatever it might involve, do you believe you can achieve such a life if you haven’t already? Or do you think it’s a pipe-dream, perhaps possible for others but not for you?

I truly believe it’s possible for everyone. I also believe it’s our right.

We’ve all been born into this world with the potential to live an extraordinary life. Why not realise that potential? Why settle for anything less?

Some of you may be thinking life hasn’t been all that brilliant up to now, so even if you could dramatically change it, you’d only have lived half a brilliant life. In the pages that follow you’ll learn to totally accept the past for the simple reason that it couldn’t possibly have been different.

The future on the other hand is wide open. Wherever you are on life’s journey, the future is there to be grabbed. It can be amazing.

Let’s make it happen.

# 1.

## WHAT IS POSITIVE ACCEPTANCE?

*The greatest discovery of our generation is that a person can change his life by altering his attitude of mind.*

*William James*

I probably shouldn't open a book by offending all my readers, but I have to tell you the truth:

### **You're crazy**

Actually completely bonkers. The fact is we're all crazy. There may be some exceptions, but truly I doubt if you're one of them. Let me explain.

Think of a time when you've been unhappy, dissatisfied, disappointed, stressed or irritated about something.

- Maybe you were chastising yourself when you left the house and shut the door with the keys still inside
- Perhaps you were annoyed with your local council when they got you to separate all your recyclables, then tipped everything in the same truck

Well, here's an amazing fact about us humans.

**Whenever we're dissatisfied about anything, we're nearly always wanting the past or present moment to be different.**

We all know the past can never be changed, though you may at times still wish it were different. Perhaps you haven't thought so much about the fact that the present moment can never be changed either. We may be able to change the next moment or any future moment, but we can never undo what **already** is.

And yet that's what we're nearly always wanting, whenever we're dissatisfied about anything.

We're wanting something that's happened, not to have happened. Or we're wanting a situation that exists right now, not to exist right now. Which is wishing for the impossible.

**Now, that's what I call crazy**

I say ‘nearly always’, because there’s an exception ... worrying about the future. We’ll look at worry later and I’ll try to persuade you this is just as crazy.

For the moment let’s stick with the main evidence for my claim. We humans spend a great deal of time and energy wishing things were **ALREADY** different, in other words wanting the past or present moment to be different, such as:

- **regretting something we’ve done or haven’t done**
- **being unhappy, dissatisfied or stressed about something that’s happened or a situation that exists right now**
- **wishing we already have more abilities, more confidence, better health, more wealth, than we currently have**
- **being unhappy about, or complaining (unproductively) about, other people’s actions**

In all these cases, we’re effectively wanting something to be **already** different, which is crazy because nothing can ever be ‘already’ different.

Valuable though this understanding is, it’s not the ‘extraordinary truth’ mentioned on the back cover of this book. That will be introduced in Chapter 3.

**What if we could keep our preferences as to how we’d like things to be, and do everything we can to make them that way, but never be dissatisfied when they’re not **ALREADY** the way we prefer, or at least not remain dissatisfied beyond any initial reaction?**

What if we could accept the past and present moment all the time, and at the same time develop our abilities to change whatever we want to change and achieve whatever we want to achieve in the next moment or in the future?

- What if, having left the house, closed the door and realised the keys are still inside, we could immediately accept the situation (not wish it were already different) and think only about how to rectify it and prevent it happening again?
- What if having watched the refuse collector tip all our separated rubbish in the same truck, we could immediately accept the situation (not wish it were already different) and think only about whether there’s something we can do towards preventing it from happening again?

What if we could do this with every challenging situation we ever face?

Some of you may think you already do this, in which case I wholeheartedly apologise for suggesting you’re crazy. But let me ask you. Be honest. Are you ever unhappy, dissatisfied, disappointed, stressed or irritated about anything, even for a moment? If

you are, then you're at least occasionally wanting something to be already different. So maybe you're just a bit crazy.

## Accepting what is

The word 'acceptance' is most commonly used to imply:

- consenting to something
- resigning ourselves to a situation
- not trying to change things

This type of 'acceptance' means not wanting something to be different in the future. This makes sense when we're 'accepting things we cannot possibly change'. But this isn't the sort of acceptance I'm talking about here.

I'm talking about not wanting something to be **already** different, in other words not wishing the past or present moment were different, which can be applied to every challenging situation, whether or not we can change it. The term we use for this is '**accepting what is**'.

'Accepting what is' means accepting the past or present moment. It means recognising we cannot undo what already is.

So there's no point wishing  
that something that's happened,  
or a situation that exists right now,  
were **ALREADY** different.

The opposite of 'accepting what is' is called 'resisting what is', which is another term for wanting something to be **already** different. 'Resisting what is' is the source of practically all unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

'Accepting what is' enables us to focus on what we need to do to change the situation for the better or otherwise improve the future.

If I've failed an exam, there's no point dwelling on how much better it would be if I'd passed, wishing I'd worked harder, had more ability or been luckier with the questions.

I'll be happier if I can accept what's happened, for the simple reason that it's happened and cannot be 'unhappened', and concentrate on whatever needs to be done to improve the future: work harder, change direction or whatever.

What if we could learn to 'accept what is' all the time? Maybe life would be different. For now, if you haven't already adopted this way of thinking, you'll have to take my word for it ... it's hugely different.

Many years ago, when I knew nothing about ‘accepting what is’ (in fact I knew very little about anything really worth knowing), I witnessed a middle-ranking executive face a career-threatening challenge.

On the spur of the moment, he produced a response that impressed everyone who witnessed it.

When I later congratulated him for what he’d done, he took the time to give me some advice. He said he believed it was the best advice he could give anyone. He said “when you’re facing a challenging situation, don’t waste a moment wishing it were different. Focus only on how you can make it different.”

At first I thought “surely we have to want something to be different to be motivated to change it”. Then I realised we only have to want something to be different in the next moment or the future to be motivated to change it. What he meant was “don’t waste a moment wishing it were **already** different.”

He wasn’t ‘accepting’ the situation, since he clearly intended to change it. But he was ‘accepting what is’.

At the time I still initially thought that, while sensible, this seemed a rather obvious piece of wisdom. But I quickly realised that, however sensible and obvious it might seem, it wasn’t a piece of wisdom I was following in my life. When I stopped to think about it, I noticed I was wanting situations to be **already** different many times every day.

I soon realised that practically everyone else seemed to be doing the same.

The executive who gave me this advice was one of the most effective, focused and unflappable individuals I’ve ever met. He went on to become the chief executive of one of the world’s largest and most successful companies.

So how could we drop our habit of ‘resisting what is’ or wanting things to be already different, replacing it with ‘accepting what is’, then focusing on action to change it if that’s what we want to do? How about this for an idea:

What if whenever we’re dissatisfied about anything, we could make ourselves aware that what we’re doing is wanting something to be **already** different?

What if we could acknowledge that this is irrational (actually crazy !!!) because nothing can ever be already different, so we’re wishing for the impossible?

Maybe we could then drop the thought and refocus on what we can do, if anything, to make it different in the next moment or the future, if that's what we want and are able to do.

You may question whether you can 'drop' such thoughts. The truth is that when we realise a thought is irrational and of no benefit, we can drop it, except when we're experiencing strong emotions. If you doubt you can do this, I suggest you give it a try.

Don't start with your big issue if you have one. Start small and build up:

- the train has just left and you're still on the platform
- you want to make a mobile call and the battery's flat
- you've planned something outdoors and it's raining

If we're dissatisfied with any of these situations or any other situation, we're 'resisting what is'. We're wanting something to be **already** different.

**The situation is what it is. It can't be 'already different', so we may as well drop any thought that involves wishing it were already different and refocus on what we can do, if anything, to make it different, or otherwise improve the future.**

As you're looking at the rain with irritation or disappointment at having to change your outdoor plans, recognise you're wishing something were already different, acknowledge you're wishing for the impossible, choose to drop the thought and refocus on what you can do to improve the situation ..... move your plans indoors, order a marquee, go scuba diving.

We're not just trying to turn off negative thoughts. On its own that would be pretty challenging. The key is to first recognise we're wishing something were **already** different and that this is irrational as we're wishing for the impossible. With that realisation, we can usually drop the thought, once any emotional reaction has subsided, and refocus on what we need to do, if anything, to improve the future.