

THE FANTASY-REALITY GAP

STAGE FOUR OF THE IMPACT MODEL: A FOR ACCEPTANCE

AIMS:

- Develop your understanding of acceptance and the Fantasy-Reality Gap (FRG) concept.
- Gain insight into your current relationship with acceptance.
- Identify areas in your life where acceptance may be needed.
- Foster acceptance by highlighting its benefits.

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MODEL



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ACCEPTANCE AND FANTASY-REALITY GAPS

While many of us understand the importance of acceptance, that doesn't mean we know how to apply it in ways that help us thrive in our personal and professional lives. That's why we developed the Fantasy-Reality Gap (FRG) concept. Whenever we struggle or fail to accept aspects of our identity (who we are), behaviour (what we do), or lifestyle (how we live), we create what we call unhelpful FRGs. These are the gaps between how we think our lives are, can, or should be (the fantasy), and how they actually are, can, or must be (the reality). When we resist acceptance, we enter an unwinnable battle between fantasy and reality.

Since all we can do is accept things as they are, can, or must be—no matter how challenging—closing these unhelpful FRGs through acceptance is the best and kindest thing we can do for ourselves. Why?

1. Fighting a losing battle between fantasy and reality takes an unsustainable toll on our wellbeing.
2. Achieving acceptance comes with numerous benefits, the most important of which is that we keep rather than lose the energy lost to unhelpful FRGs to invest in what matters the most, for example, ourselves, our family and friends, or our career.
3. Acceptance makes transformation possible because acceptance isn't resignation; it's the first stage of meaningful change.
4. Acceptance generates helpful FRGs, which are normal and 'helpful' as they highlight the gap between our current reality and our desired future, showing the path to bridge the two.

THE FRG ACTIVITY

Our FRG activity will help you discover whether you have any unhelpful FRGs undermining your life and if you need to find acceptance. The activity comprises of the following three stages:

- Creating a general list of FRG statements relating to your identity, behaviour and lifestyle.
- Using our FRG Symptom Checker to refine your search for and understanding of any unhelpful FRGs you discover.
- Building a detailed map covering all areas of your personal and professional lives where any unhelpful FRGs exist.

To get the most out of the activity, here are some suggestions for how to go about it:

- Do the activity more than once, with gaps in between, as it can take time to master.
- Do the activity by yourself and, if possible, with at least one trusted other.
- Appreciate your findings regardless of what you discover.

STAGE ONE: GENERAL FRG STATEMENTS

The three main types of FRG – identity, behaviour, and lifestyle – and their accompanying statements are listed below. Look down both lists to familiarise yourself with them, and then do the task underneath. The first list is for unhelpful FRGs; the second is for the helpful ones we all need as the foundation of our lives.

UNHELPFUL FRGS	HELPFUL FRGS
Who I am is not who I think I am Who I am is not who I think I should be Who I want to be is not who I can be	Who I am is who I think I am Who I am is who I want to be Who I want to be is who I can be
What I am doing is not what I think I am doing What I am doing is not what I think I should be doing What I want to do is not what I can do	What I am doing is what I think I am doing What I am doing is what I want to be doing What I want to do is what I can do
How my life is, is not what I think my life is How my life is, is not how I think my life should be How I want my life to be is not how my life can be.	How my life is, is how I think my life is How my life is, is how I want my life to be How I want my life to be is how my life can be



Task continued on next page

STAGE ONE: GENERAL FRG STATEMENTS

Considering the above statements, write down any you feel confident definitely apply to you and make a 'best guess' for the others. In our experience, people create several lists before agreeing on a final one.

What did you discover?

- Do you have more unhelpful or helpful statements or a similar number of each?
- Is there a type (identity, behaviour and lifestyle) you connected with the most? Or did you feel similar about all three?
- What does your list say about your relationship with acceptance i.e., is it negative or positive?

STAGE TWO: THE FRG SYMPTOM CHECKER

How can you tell if you definitely have unhelpful or helpful FRGs? Well, your statement list might offer some clues, but years of experience also tell us that unhelpful and helpful FRGs come with their own identifiable 'symptoms'. So, to remove any doubt about which of the two exists at the centre of your life, you can use our FRG Symptoms Checker. In the lefthand column are the symptoms of unhelpful FRGs, and in the righthand column are those of helpful FRGs. Note down those you feel apply to you.

SIGNS OF UNHELPFUL FRGS	SIGNS OF HELPFUL FRGS
Poor mental health and wellbeing: difficult emotions such as stress, anxiety, depression, anger self-criticism, negative self-talk negative thoughts, unwanted intrusive thoughts negative, self-limiting beliefs low self-esteem, self-worth, low confidence negative memories tiredness, fatigue, exhaustion poor motivation poor sleep	Good mental health and wellbeing: positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, interest, serenity self-appreciation positive self-talk positive thoughts, a clear mind self-empowering beliefs good level of self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence positive memories high energy levels, quick recovery resiliency good levels of motivation good sleep
Negative behaviours: avoidance procrastination perfectionism fear of failure avoidance of risk-taking impatience frustration obsession, compulsion, addiction self-sabotage, self-destruct denial, secrecy poor self-care, self-neglect	Positive behaviours: engagement productive good enough stretched and challenged educated risk-taking setbacks are opportunities patience contentedness restraint, control, self-possession self-supporting openness, honesty, transparency good self-care

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STAGE TWO: THE FRG SYMPTOM CHECKER

SIGNS OF UNHELPFUL FRGS	SIGNS OF HELPFUL FRGS
Relationships (with self and others): critical, judgmental gameplaying blurred boundaries unconfident, people-pleasing comparisons with others, jealousy, envy, dismissive, intolerant arrogant/self-promoting withdrawn, avoidant argumentative, irritable, blaming issues with responsibility and accountability	Relationships (with self and others): supportive, respectful relaxed clear boundaries assertive: I'm ok, you're ok acceptance and tolerance humility connection agreeable, enjoyable approving responsible and accountable
Unhelpful change strategies: unrealistic expectations quick fix rejection of support inflexibility – Plan A must work	Helpful change strategies: realistic expectations commitment to doing what it takes seeking support flexibility – happy to switch to a Plan B

What did you discover?

- Which column did you connect with the most?
- Can you see a relationship between your general FRG statements and your symptoms?
- What does your list of symptoms say about your relationship with acceptance?

STAGE THREE: CREATING A DETAILED FRG MAP

This third stage looks at FRGs in greater detail. Below are the three main FRG types of identity, behaviour, and lifestyle broken down further into more specific sub-categories and examples. We have tried to make our categories and examples as comprehensive as possible, but please add any of your own you feel we have missed. As with your FRG statements, create a list of categories and examples you feel confident have unhelpful FRGs at their core and make a 'best guess' for the others. Again, consider making more than one list if necessary to help you produce a definitive version.

YOURSELF

- Identity, gender, sexuality
- Personal and professional role and status
- Beliefs about yourself and the world around you
- Self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth
- Personal qualities and characteristics e.g.,
 - Pessimism, optimism
 - Honesty, generosity, likeability
 - Introversion, extroversion
- Physical appearance
- Intellectual, emotional and social intelligence
- Abilities, capabilities and skills
- Strengths and weaknesses.

YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Social e.g., level of social connectedness and participation
- Cultural e.g., level of contribution to and participation in local and wider communities, such as volunteering, sport, religion and civic activity
- Work and career
- Personal and professional relationships
- Financial and material
- Past, present and future
- Environment (where you live and work).

YOUR STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING CHANGE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

- Goal setting
- Strategising, planning, preparation
- Flexibility, adaptability
- Realism, sustainability.

YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS

- Personal/individual
- Collective/joint
- Academic
- Professional.

Sub-categories continued on next page

STAGE THREE: CREATING A DETAILED FRG MAP

YOUR RESOURCES (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism, pessimism • Mindset • Resilience • Flexibility (thought, behaviour, feeling and relating) • Insight, judgement • Motivation • Confidence, self-belief. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental and physical health, wellbeing • Money, wealth • Knowledge, experience and wisdom • Qualifications, competencies, training and skills • People and support • Time • Information, knowledge, technology • Environment (access to what you need) |
|---|--|

What did you discover?

- Which categories and examples did you list, and what type of FRG did you apply to them?
- Can you see a relationship between your general FRG statements, symptoms and detailed map?
- What does your detailed map say about your relationship with acceptance?

THE BENEFITS OF ACCEPTANCE

As finding acceptance closes unhelpful FRGs and creates helpful ones, meaning we are no longer in conflict with our reality, it produces a range of life-enhancing benefits, including:

- **Enhanced energy levels:** being in conflict with our reality is highly energy intensive, the equivalent of rowing a boat with several holes in it. Finding acceptance means lost energy is returned to us to invest in getting our lives back on track.
- **Increased confidence and motivation:** with more energy, problem-solving and solution-finding become easier, resulting in increased confidence and motivation. Possibilities previously dismissed as too difficult become ones we want to act upon.
- **Strengthened relationships:** greater energy and confidence levels make it easier to ask for and receive support. Feeling like our 'old self' again changes how we relate to ourselves and those around us.
- **Better health and wellbeing:** high energy levels, increased confidence and improved relationships all feed into our health and wellbeing. We sleep better and feel more motivated to do the basics, such as eating healthily, exercising and connecting with our support network.
- **Restoration of strengths and resources:** all of the above benefits help to restore our strengths and resources, often hidden or warped by fantasy states. And while these strengths and resources may be more or less than we imagined, because they are a true reflection, we no longer fall into the trap of under or overestimating what we are capable of.

Perhaps the most significant benefit, though, of acceptance is that it lays the foundations, in the form of helpful FRGs, for our successful personal and professional progression.



NEXT STEPS

We hope you now have a greater understanding of acceptance, your relationship with it, and the areas of your life (identity, behaviour and lifestyle) that might be affected by unhelpful FRGs.

Combining your findings from all three stages, where does your focus need to be? On your identity, behaviour or lifestyle or combinations of? Transforming a negative relationship with acceptance into a positive one? Committing to a life of acceptance and enjoying its many benefits?