
3 Case Stories



**MINDLESS TV
WATCHING**

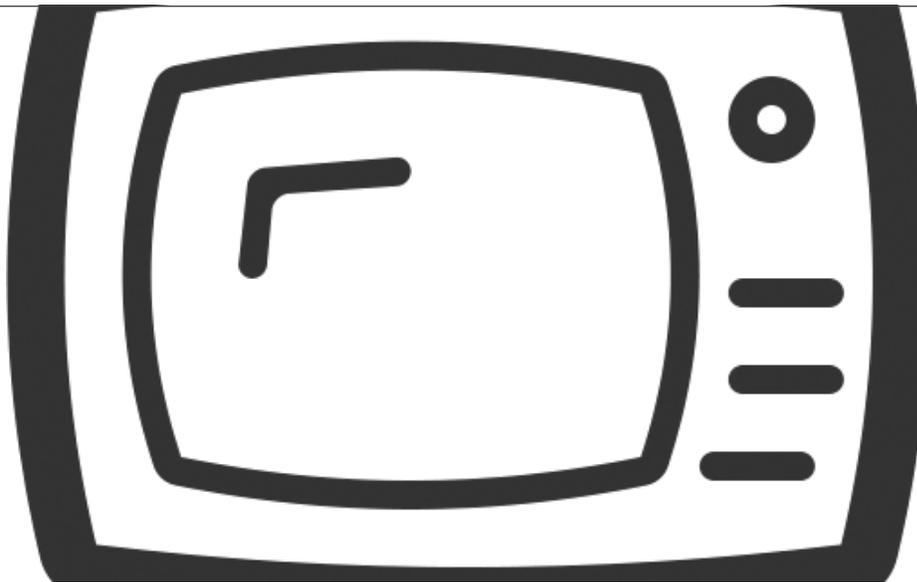


**FRIENDS WHO
ARE NEGATIVE**



**NOT BEING A
MORNING
PERSON**

TOLERATIONS IN REAL LIFE



Mindless TV Watching

Background: Laura complained about a habit she'd developed over the summer of too much TV watching.

All day long I think about everything I'm going to do and get done after work. Instead, I spend the evening mindlessly in front of the TV, squandering my precious free time. Then I feel irritated and disappointed in myself the next day because I'm not making any progress on my goals.

Laura had captured the immediate and opportunity costs of her toleration in a single sentence: *Then I feel irritated and disappointed in myself the next day because I'm not making any progress on my goals.*

Her immediate reaction—and therefore the cost—to mindless TV watching is irritation and feeling disappointed in herself.

The opportunity cost is failing to make progress on her goals.

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Let's look at applying ACE to this toleration—Mindless TV watching

Accepting this toleration might mean Laura lets herself off the hook for “squandering precious free time” and instead embraces the need for a time out. Perhaps there are reasons the summer has seen more TV watching than productivity.

By reframing TV watching from a mindless activity to much needed downtime, the irritation and disappointment ease. By actually embracing the need to take a break from working on goals, Laura shifts from frustration to self-compassion.

At the same time, acceptance doesn't mean Laura never makes progress on her goals and continues watching TV every evening. She can choose to fully accept her TV watching for a defined period of time—thereby breaking the spell of self-loathing—and then revisit at a designated time whether she wants to move toward Change or Eliminate.

Changing the nature of this toleration doesn't mean Laura will never watch TV again. Instead, to mitigate the negative impact of this toleration, she needs to figure out how much TV watching is OK versus at what point it interferes with making progress on her goals.

Therefore, changing this toleration could be as simple as determining upfront how much TV watching is acceptable—one hour a day, three hours a week, ten hours a month, etc.—and then staying within that limit. Constraining one type of behavior—TV watching—potentially maximizes another type of behavior—goal progression.

Eliminating this toleration is both straightforward and challenging: Stop mindlessly watching TV and devote that time to making progress on her goals. Elimination means going cold turkey and keeping the TV turned off.

Because this toleration only emerged over the summer, the moratorium on TV watching could be for a pre-determined period of time—say the next 90 days. Laura can then decide whether reintroducing limited TV watching is possible without jeopardizing continued forward movement on her goals.

What course of action would you take if this were your toleration? What other ideas do you have for what accept, change, or eliminate might look like?

ACE is an easy way to remember 3 possible courses of action to address any toleration.

A

Accept the toleration

C

Change the nature of the toleration

E

Eliminate the toleration

Don't overcomplicate your options. ACE offers a simple, action-oriented approach guaranteed to support you in reducing your tolerations.



Friends who are negative and complain

Background: Stephanie recently identified a toleration: Her friends are frequently negative and complain a lot. *The negativity and complaining are draining. I have limited time with my friends and spending it this way isn't enriching my life.*

Believing what you focus on is what you get, Stephanie is keenly aware that focusing on the glass being half empty and then complaining about it is not in sync with what she wants for herself and her life.

She goes home from these interactions feeling drained, slightly down, and sheepishly disappointed in herself for joining in with the woe is me. *All that negativity and complaining is not helping me be my best self.*

Let's look at applying ACE to this toleration—Friends who are negative and complain

Accepting this toleration might result from taking an inventory of the friendships and deciding they are still robust and meaningful enough that the negativity and complaining are not deal breakers. Accepting might mean making a conscious decision not to “police” or judge her friends’ behavior, while at the same time intentionally modeling positivity for them.

Accepting might mean letting go of being able to control or influence her friends into “better” behavior, but also taking full and complete responsibility for her own actions, staying true to herself, and not jumping on the “woe is me” bandwagon.

“All that negativity and complaining is not helping me be my best self.”

Changing this toleration might entail Stephanie having a heart-to-heart talk with her friends, candidly sharing the impact their negativity and

complaining are having on her. She could express her desire for a focus on positivity and to create a complaint-free zone during a significant portion of their get-togethers.

For instance, she could negotiate with her friends that everyone gets 5 minutes when they first come together to vent and complain, but when their time is up, so is the focus on negativity. While this approach doesn't altogether eliminate negative comments and complaints, it has the potential to drastically reduce their number. In all likelihood, simply having a crucial conversation with her friends is bound to change the nature of this toleration.

Eliminating this toleration could take a couple of different forms—one that allows the friendships to continue and grow, and one that doesn't.

The first option would entail Stephanie sitting down with her friends for a frank discussion about their behavior, about what they all want and expect from their friendship, and how they each have the responsibility to grow as individuals as well as support each others' growth. Out of this conversation could come new ways of engaging with each other, including ones that are more positive and less complaint-oriented than in the past.

The second option for eliminating this toleration is determining the friendships have run their course and are simply no longer able to be a positive source of energy for Stephanie.

What course of action would you take if this were your toleration? What other ideas do you have for what accept, change, or eliminate might look like?



Not being a morning person

Background: Pam is trying to carve out time for creative pursuits and self-care—in addition to working full-time and being a mother and wife.

If I were a morning person, this would all be so much easier. I could have 'me time' to meditate and do yoga before the kids are awake. I could even write or work on one of my metal projects.

To my ears, Pam had identified the problem and come up with a solution in one fell swoop.

Me: *So when will you begin?*

Pam: *Oh no, I'm just not a morning person.*

When we dug a bit deeper, it became clear that “not being a morning person” was something Pam was tolerating—and definitely a belief-behavior combo standing in the way of what she wanted more—to have some time for herself.

In her own words, *I know it's a toleration because I feel so de-energized by the thought. So stuck. I get really excited about the possibilities of a little time for myself and then immediately feel deflated thinking it's just not possible.*

Applying ACE to this toleration—Not being a morning person

Accepting this toleration might mean actually embracing you're not a morning person, but then shifting the thoughts, attitudes, and actions that typically follow. Whether you believe you can't change not being a morning person or simply choose not to, acceptance can shift you from limitation to possibility: I'm not a morning person, AND I still find time for self-care and creative pursuits. It's not just a matter of semantics. When you refuse to buy into a limiting belief about what's possible, you start looking for creative ways and workarounds to make it happen.

The conversation with Pam went something like this: *OK, so you're not a morning person and "me time" is not happening in the morning before the kids get up. We've untangled those two beliefs, which means now we can get really resourceful about what other time is available for self-care and creative pursuits. Notice I'm not questioning whether there ARE other pockets of time. I'm assuming there are. So now we just have to find them.*

Changing this toleration might mean Pam acknowledges she's not a morning person—and we go from there with a curious mind. While this is not the full-on embrace of acceptance, this type of non-judgmental acknowledgement still opens up possibilities. Remember: Pam is tolerating not being a morning person because she believes it interferes with her ability to carve out "me time"—not necessarily because she desires being a morning person in and of itself.

The reality of her situation is morning time before the kids are awake is prime for this coveted "me time". So the question becomes: Can she not be a morning person and still get up early a couple days a week for "me time"? The lever that can move the underlying nature of this toleration—not being a morning person—is reflecting on her purpose for getting up early. It's one thing for the alarm to go off at 5 a.m. because you have tasks to do versus joyful activities to feed your soul. By focusing more on the "Why" of getting up early, Pam may not become a morning person, but still be able to get up early for what matters to her.

Eliminating this toleration could take awhile, but is possible.

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Research suggests anyone can become a morning person by simply setting their alarm 5 minutes earlier each week until you reach your desired wake-up time.

For example, if your regular wake-up time is 6:30 a.m. and you want to start waking at 5 a.m., set your alarm for 6:25 a.m. for one week, then 6:20 for the following week, and so on. This very small alteration of 5 minutes a week is so gradual that your body and mind have time to adjust. While it may take awhile, this strategy allows you to become a morning person.

What course of action would you take if this were your toleration? What other ideas do you have for what accept, change, or eliminate might look like?

Remember: You have better things to do than tolerate. Tolerations keep you from growing and living your best life.