

Become the O.W.N.E.R. of Your Distressing Feelings – A Technique for Dealing with Divorce

Objective

To acknowledge, process, and own your distressing feelings after your divorce.

What to Know

Divorce can trigger unsettling and uncomfortable feelings, including grief, loneliness, despair, guilt, frustration, anxiety, hopelessness, anger, and devastation, to name a few. All these feelings are enough to make you depressed, and you might be tempted to blame your ex-partner for putting you through this.

Painful as they are, these feelings are natural reactions to a very difficult and life-altering situation. However, you can cope with them and gain wisdom, self-compassion, and strength. Instead of avoiding and repressing your feelings – or blaming your ex – become the O.W.N.E.R. of your feelings to effectively cope with them and begin to recover. This process includes the following steps:

Open up your awareness to your feelings and begin to take responsibility for your choices.

Where do you experience your feelings? For example, maybe you feel heaviness in the pit of your stomach.

Name your feelings. Try to be specific. For example, at the root of your anger might be hurt and disappointment.

Embrace your feelings, even if it is difficult, and comfort yourself with the knowledge that they will pass. Journaling or practicing mindfulness exercises can help.

Resist the temptation to evaluate your experience as good or bad. Instead, take a neutral stance, offer yourself compassion, and avoid self-judgment.

When you experience distress, be the O.W.N.E.R. of your feelings and use the above strategies to acknowledge, process, and own them.

What to Do

First, answer the following questions.

Are you willing to be open to your distressing feelings and take responsibility for your choices? Why or why not?

Where do you typically experience feelings in your body?

What specific feelings are you experiencing? Is it sadness, hurt, anger, guilt, fear, or something else?

What are some things you can do to embrace your feelings, reminding yourself that the feelings will pass?

In what ways can you be self-compassionate and avoid judgment?

Use the chart on the next page for two weeks. Record when you have distressing feelings related to your divorce. Write down the date, describe your feelings (be specific!), and note what you did to manage or cope. Write down if you used one of the O.W.N.E.R. strategies described above. Finally, describe how you felt afterward.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did this exercise help you become the O.W.N.E.R. of your feelings? Why or why not?

Did you feel better when you implemented these strategies? Explain.

What are some ways you can remind yourself to practice the O.W.N.E.R. strategies?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
