

# Radical Openness Handout 1.2

## What Is Radical Openness?

- Radical openness means being open to new information or disconfirming feedback in order to learn.
- Radical openness helps us learn to celebrate self-discovery—it is freedom from being stuck.
- Radical openness can be rewarding—it often involves trying out novel ways of behaving that may help us cope more effectively.
- Radical openness is courageous—it alerts us to areas of our life that may need to change.
- Radical openness enhances relationships—it models humility and readiness to learn from what the world has to offer.
- Radical openness involves purposeful self-enquiry and a willingness to acknowledge one's fallibility—with an intention to change (if needed). It can be both painful and liberating.
- Radical openness challenges our perceptions of reality. *We don't see things as they are—we see things as we are.*
- Being *open* to learning new things involves a willingness to consider that there are many ways to get to the same place.
- Radical openness takes responsibility for our personal reactions and emotions—rather than automatically blaming others or the world.
- Radical openness helps us adapt to an ever-changing environment.

## Radical Openness Is Not...

- Approval, naively believing, or mindlessly giving in
- Assuming one already knows the answer
- Something that can solely be understood intellectually—it requires direct and repeated practice
- Rejecting the past
- Expecting good things to happen
- Always changing
- Being rigid about being open

# Radical Openness Handout 1.3

## Learning from Self-Enquiry

**Instructions:** Use the sample questions that follow to enhance your practice of radical openness; see worksheet 1.B (Flexible Mind DEFinitely: Three Steps for Radically Open Living).

**Carry a copy of this list with you and write down in your RO self-enquiry journal new questions you discover.**

- *Is it possible that my bodily tension means that I am not fully open to the feedback? If yes or possibly, then what am I avoiding? Is there something here to learn?*
- *Is the resistance, dislike, and tension I am feeling helpful? What is it that I might need to learn from my closed-mindedness?*
- *Do I find myself wanting to automatically explain, defend, or discount the other person's feedback or what is happening? If yes or maybe, then is this a sign that I may not be truly open?*
- *Am I finding it hard to question my point of view or even engage in self-enquiry? If yes or maybe, then what might this mean?*
- *Am I talking more quickly or immediately responding to the other person's feedback or questions? Am I holding my breath or breathing more quickly? Has my heart rate changed? If yes or maybe, then what does this mean? What is driving me to respond so quickly? Is it possible I am feeling threatened?*
- *Am I able to truly pause and consider the possibility that I may be wrong or may need to change? Am I saying to myself "I know I am right" no matter what they say or how things seem? Or do I feel like shutting down, quitting, or giving up? If yes or maybe, then is it possible that I am operating out of Fixed or Fatalistic Mind? What is it that I fear?*
- *Am I resisting being open to this feedback because part of me believes that doing so will change an essential part of who I am? If yes or maybe, then what might this mean? What am I afraid of?*
- *Am I automatically blaming the other person or the environment for my emotional reactions? If yes or maybe, then is it possible this could represent a way for me to avoid being open to the feedback?*
- *Do I believe that I know what the intentions are of the person giving me the disconfirming feedback? For example, am I assuming that they are trying to promote themselves? Or do I believe that they are trying to manipulate, coerce, or intimidate me? If yes or maybe, then is it possible that I am not really giving them a chance? What am I afraid might happen if I were to momentarily drop my perspective?*
- *Do I think it is unfair to fully listen to someone who I believe is not listening to me? If yes or sometimes, then is it possible this is occurring now? If yes or maybe, then why do I need things to be fair?*
- *Do I feel invalidated, hurt, unappreciated, or misunderstood by the person giving me the disconfirming feedback? Is there a part of me that believes it is important for them to acknowledge (or apologize) that they do not understand me before I would be willing to fully consider their position? If yes or maybe, then why do I need to be understood? Why do I need to be validated? Is it possible this desire might subtly block openness on my part by requiring the other person to change first?*

- *Do I believe that further self-examination is unnecessary because I have already worked out the problem, know the answer, or have done the necessary self-work about the issue being discussed? If yes or maybe, then is it possible that I am not willing to truly examine my personal responses? Why do I feel so convinced that I already know the answer? What do I fear I may lose?*
- *Do I desire to capitulate, give up, or agree with the feedback? If yes or maybe, then is it possible that my agreement is disguised avoidance? Am I agreeing in order to avoid conflict, not because I truly believe they are right? What might this mean?*
- *Is the feedback I am being given something that I have heard from others before? If so, what might this mean? Is it possible that there is something to learn from this feedback?*

**If you find yourself resisting self-enquiry or feeling nothing, use self-enquiry to explore this further by asking...**

- *What might my resistance be trying to tell me? What is it I need to learn?*
- *What does my resistance tell me about myself or my willingness to engage in learning this new skill?*
- *What am I resisting? Is there something important for me to acknowledge or recognize about myself or the current moment?*
- *Is it possible that I am numbing out or shutting down in order to avoid taking responsibility or make important changes? What is it that I need to learn?*

**Use the following space to record new self-enquiry questions that emerge for you over time.**

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# Radical Openness Handout 1.4

## Main Points for Lesson 1: Radical Openness

1. We tend to pay attention to things that fit our beliefs and ignore or dismiss those things that do not.
2. We don't know what we don't know, and this keeps us from learning new things.
3. To learn anything new, we must acknowledge our lack of knowledge and then behave differently!
4. RO DBT considers psychological health to involve three core features: (1) receptivity and openness, (2) flexible control, and (3) intimacy and connectedness.
5. There are pros and cons to being open, as well as to being closed.
6. We only need to practice radical openness when we are closed.
7. Radical openness enhances relationships because it models humility and a willingness to learn from the world. Yet, it can be both painful and liberating because it often requires sacrificing firmly held convictions or beliefs in order to learn or connect with another.
8. To practice Use Flexible Mind DEFinately and the three steps needed for open living: (1) acknowledge the presence of an unwanted private experience, (2) practice self-enquiry by turning toward the discomfort in order to learn, and (3) flexibly respond by doing what's needed in the moment.

# Radical Openness Worksheet 1.A

## Myths of a Closed Mind

**Instructions:** Place a checkmark in the box next to each myth you believe is true or somewhat true.

- ☐ Being open means others can use you. Only idiots are open.
- ☐ If you don't have an opinion on how things should be, you'll get hurt.
- ☐ Planning ahead is always imperative.
- ☐ There is a right and wrong way to do things and that's the way it is.
- ☐ Behaving correctly is the most important thing in life.
- ☐ I have tried everything there is to try. There is nothing new out there.
- ☐ Even if I tried something new, it won't help.
- ☐ You can't teach an old dog a new trick.
- ☐ If I try something new and it works, I was a fool for not trying it before.
- ☐ If I try something new, then it means I was wrong.
- ☐ New things are for gullible fools.
- ☐ Doing something different means giving up my values.
- ☐ It doesn't matter what you say or how things seem, when I am right about something I know I am correct.
- ☐ Doing what I always do just feels right.
- ☐ It is always important to do things properly.
- ☐ Rules are there to be followed—especially mine.

In the following space, write out any other myths you may have about emotions that were not mentioned.

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**Next:** Pick one of the preceding myths that you strongly believe in and practice self-enquiry about the myth over the next week.

- **Remember to keep your self-enquiry practices short in duration**—for example, not much longer than five minutes. The goal of self-enquiry is to *find a good question* that brings you closer to your edge or personal unknown (the place you don't want to go), in order to learn. After a week, move to another myth and repeat your self-enquiry practice.
- **Remember to record** in your RO self-enquiry journal the images, thoughts, emotions, and sensations that emerge when you practice self-enquiry about your myths.
- **Remember to practice being suspicious of quick answers** to self-enquiry questions. Allow any answers to your self-enquiry practice to emerge over time.
- **Remember, self-enquiry does not automatically assume that a myth is wrong, bad, or dysfunctional.** Use the following questions to enhance your practice.
  - *What might I need to learn from this myth?*
  - *What might this myth be telling me about myself and my life?*
  - *Am I feeling tense doing this exercise?*
  - *Am I feeling tense right now? If so, then what might this mean? What is it that I might need to learn?*
  - *How open am I to thinking differently about this myth or changing the myth?*
  - *If I am not open or only partly open, then what might this mean?*
  - *How does holding on to this myth help me live more fully?*
  - *How might changing this myth help me live more fully?*
  - *What might my resistance to changing this myth be telling me?*
  - *Is there something to learn from my resistance?*
  - *What does holding on to this myth tell me about myself?*
  - *What do I fear might happen if I momentarily let go of this myth?*
  - *What is it that I need to learn?*

Use the following space to record additional self-enquiry questions or observations that emerged from your practice.

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## Radical Openness Worksheet 1.B

### Flexible Mind DEFinitely: Three Steps for Radically Open Living

#### Flexible Mind DEFinitely

**D** Acknowledge **D**istress or unwanted emotion

**E** Use self-**E**nquiry to learn

**F** **F**lexibly respond with humility

**Instructions:** Look for a time in the coming week when you find yourself feeling tense, irritated, annoyed, uncertain, invalidated, criticized, fearful, judgmental, numb, shut down, closed, resisting, ruminating, or disliking something and then use the following skills to practice radical openness.

- **Remember, we only need to practice radical openness when we are closed**—plus, small moments are just as important as big ones (for example, disliking someone cutting you off in traffic may be just as important to practice RO with as an argument with your spouse).

**D** Acknowledge **D**istress or unwanted emotion (*for example, annoyance, anxiety, tension in the body, numbness*).

Place a checkmark in the boxes next to the questions that best address your unwanted experience.

- ☐ Were you in a novel or uncertain situation?
- ☐ Did you feel invalidated, misunderstood, or criticized?
- ☐ Were your expectations or beliefs about the world, other people, or yourself being challenged?

Other circumstances.

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**Describe in the following space what happened.** Where were you when it happened? Who were you with? What did you feel inside your body?

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**E** Use self-**Enquiry** to learn from the distress rather than automatically attempting to regulate, distract, change, deny, or accept.

Place a checkmark in the boxes that best describe the skill you practiced.

- ☐ In the heat of the moment, I turned toward my discomfort and asked *What do I need to learn?* rather than automatically regulating, distracting, fixing, or trying to accept.
- ☐ Made a commitment to practice self-enquiry on multiple days after the event had passed.
- ☐ Remembered that self-enquiry means *finding a good question* that brings me closer to my edge (my personal unknown), not finding a good answer.
- ☐ Found my edge by turning my mind to the very thing I don't want to think about or admit having.
- ☐ Celebrated finding my edge as an opportunity for growth.
- ☐ Recorded my edge in my RO self-enquiry journal and used it to focus my self-enquiry practice.
- ☐ Pinpointed a question that elicited my edge.
- ☐ Used a self-enquiry question from handout 1.2 (What Is Radical Openness?) to enhance my practice.
- ☐ Remembered that the best self-enquiry question is the one I dislike the most.
- ☐ Set aside five minutes per day over a period of several days to ask my self-enquiry question and recorded what emerged each day in my RO self-enquiry journal.
- ☐ Purposefully kept my self-enquiry practices brief (five minutes or less) by recognizing that prolonged practices are often disguised attempts to prove I am working hard, punish myself, or solve the problem in order to feel better.
- ☐ Practiced being slightly suspicious of quick answers or urges to justify my actions when asking my self-enquiry question.
- ☐ Remembered that ruminating or brooding is not self-enquiry—it is me trying to *solve the problem or regulate/avoid my discomfort*.
- ☐ Blocked blaming myself, others, or the world during my practice of self-enquiry.
- ☐ Noticed secret attempts to avoid my edge or downregulate during a self-enquiry practice and used this to deepen my understanding rather than as another opportunity to get down on myself.

- ☐ Blocked attempts to be perfect at self-enquiry.
- ☐ When I found myself resisting self-enquiry, I used self-enquiry to explore my resistance, using the questions from handout 1.3 (Learning from Self-Enquiry).

Record in the following space the self-enquiry question(s) you found most useful.

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**F** **Flexibly respond** *with humility by doing what's needed in the moment, in a manner that accounts for the needs of others.*

Place a checkmark in the boxes next to the skills you practiced.

- ☐ Acknowledged that flexible responding is freely chosen by me; no one can force me to be flexible.
- ☐ Activated my social safety system to maximize my flexible responding (for example, by closed-mouth smiling with eyebrows raised while slowing and deepening my breathing).
- ☐ Used stall tactics to block automatic, habitual, and quick responding. **Check all that apply.**
  - ☐ Reminded myself it is okay to take time to reflect—not every problem needs immediate fixing.
  - ☐ Let two to three days pass before making a decision or responding to an emotionally evocative event (for example, an email, request, or telephone call).
  - ☐ Communicated to another person that I needed some time to reflect on what had just happened—including how I may have contributed to it—before making a decision about what to do or discussing it further, and then used this time to practice self-enquiry.
  - ☐ Reminded myself that stalling does not mean walking away or abandoning the problem, my responsibility, or the relationship. It means taking a short break to practice self-enquiry and then reengaging with the issue.
- ☐ Practiced living according to my values by taking responsibility for my personal reactions and responses to the world. **Check all that apply.**
  - ☐ Blocked my automatic tendency to blame others or expect the world to change when things did not go as expected.
  - ☐ Reminded myself that no one can force me to feel something.
  - ☐ Practiced outing myself about secret desires to pout, stonewall, walk away, or obstruct another person or an event instead of pretending that I was not upset, that the other person made me do it, or that they got what was coming to them.

- ☐ Gave others the benefit of the doubt (for example, by assuming that they mean well and/or are doing the best they can to cope effectively).
- ☐ Challenged my rigid belief that I was correct or right by reminding myself that we don't see things as they are, but that we see things as we are.
- ☐ Reminded myself that it is arrogant to assume that the world or other people should conform to my expectations or beliefs.
- ☐ Remembered that I don't know what I don't know, in order to be more receptive to what was happening in the moment.
- ☐ Practiced a willingness to be wrong without falling apart or giving up.
- ☐ Practiced surrendering arrogance (for example, by acknowledging the fallibility inherent in all humans or by recalling times when my convictions were proven wrong).
- ☐ Practiced letting go of desires to control or dominate other people.
- ☐ Practiced celebrating diversity by recognizing that there are many ways to live, behave, or think.
- ☐ Practiced celebrating problems as opportunities for new learning rather than obstacles preventing me from enjoying my life.
- ☐ Practiced seeing the big picture and letting go of detail-focused processing by asking...
  - ☐ *Does what I noticed really matter in the long run?*
  - ☐ *What are the downsides of holding on to my detailed observation?*
  - ☐ *What other valued goals may be negatively impacted by my insistence on this?*
- ☐ Used my desired level of intimacy to guide how I would respond by asking...
  - ☐ *Should I persist or suspend the behavior I had been engaging in prior to the unwanted experience?*
  - ☐ *Should I inhibit or disinhibit my action urges?*
  - ☐ *Should I express or constrain what I am feeling inside?*
  - ☐ *Should I reveal or edit what my beliefs, expectations, or inner thoughts are?*
- ☐ Practiced being flexible about flexibility; sometimes being closed may be what is needed in the moment, and/or change is not necessary.

**Describe other ways you may have practiced flexible responding in the following space.**

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