

What is self-acceptance?

It is the freedom from negative states – doubt, fear, shame – concerning your own image. But it is also a freedom to enjoy being yourself - without needing to pay a price for it – or having to apologise for who you are. And from that enjoyment in yourself, springs confidence, resilience and creativity.

Self-acceptance can sometimes feel like an intangible, but the effects of its presence, or absence, are very real. I can give an example from my own life as an Adult Baby. In my thirties, I ordered my first custom made baby dress. After weeks and weeks of saving and waiting, the dress arrived. It was lovely. I threw it away within a day because my internal conflict was so strong. That conflict meant that I couldn't let myself enjoy the dress and the 'me' that it represented, without paying an unbearable price of shame. It was like holding onto a red hot fire poker. So the dress had to go. My desire for the dress, and being the baby I wanted to be, had gotten too far out in front of my self-acceptance of that identity.

Decades later, I delight in wearing my pretty baby dresses. I feel wonderful. I feel like an adorable cute baby girl. There's no feeling quite like it – carefree happiness and freedom.

**My self-acceptance has caught up with my personal identity. There is no longer an internal conflict.**

I can wear my pretty baby clothes without paying a price. When I'm ready, I carefully put them away, knowing they'll be there ready whenever I want to put them on again.

That's the difference between the *absence* or *presence* of self-acceptance for an Adult Baby!

The 'traditional' route to self-acceptance is to stumble through, hoping for the best. That's like finding your way in the pitch dark – there's lots of bumping into things, falling into holes and the like. We have to bump into the same walls many times before we learn to go around them. We often resign ourselves to growth being a slow process. It seems as if we only accept ourselves when we feel we've been through enough pain and struggle to have earned it as if it is a reward for effort rather than a personal right. Stuff that! This book is about seeking a better way to self-acceptance – with less hit and miss – and less pain.

In terms of an Adult Baby identity, there's an iterative relationship between our desires and our acceptance of who we are. As we inhabit our baby persona, it will push us to 'try out' behaviours, clothes and/or fantasies that will challenge our self-image. If those behaviours, clothes or fantasies and self-*image* are a little ahead of our self-*acceptance*, they will be 'guilty pleasures' – something we enjoy, but not without a price in terms of self-recrimination. If those behaviours, clothes or fantasies are too far out in front of what we can internally handle, then the downside can be biting shame, scourging self-loathing and binge and purge cycles. That can be an awful, vicious cycle of snakes and ladders.

Deepening the self-acceptance of our Adult Baby identities is a way of shortcutting that awful cycle, sparing ourselves unnecessary pain and struggle, and with a much better prospect of a positive outcome.

Shame is a scourging, corrosive emotion, but it can also be an indicator of the gulf between our Adult Baby *desires* and our *acceptance* of our AB identity. If I'm feeling ashamed of a facet of my baby side, whether that be a piece of clothing, a behaviour or a fantasy, that shame is telling me one of two things.

Firstly, it can be a signal that what am I doing or wanting may be ultimately okay - but it has outpaced my self-acceptance - and could be disruptive and counter-productive until that level of acceptance deepens. The example I mentioned above about my wanting to wear baby dresses illustrates this perfectly. We cannot run ahead of our own acceptance of our nature without incurring a penalty of shame or disgust. This is what powers the dreaded Binge and Purge cycle.

Alternatively, shame could be telling me that a behaviour, a desired behavior or a fantasy will be harmful to myself, and likely always will be. This might be because it involves the reactions of others and doesn't depend on what level of acceptance I attain personally. For example, attending some non-ABDL friendly public gathering in my baby clothes. Or it might be because it is psychologically unsafe at any level of self-acceptance. It is important not to disregard 'shame' entirely, as it might be helping you understand and respect the boundaries that society or others imposes and for good reasons.

The only way to know which one of the two signals applies is, to consciously re-examine our own level of self-acceptance.

### **So, what is the journey of self-acceptance – what are its hidden depths and complexities?**

Achieving self-acceptance is more than just telling yourself that wearing nappies and baby clothes, liking soft toys and pacifiers, and wanting to be babied is okay - that it's harmless and doesn't hurt anybody. That's all true. But that doesn't cut it psychologically. That is nothing more than intellectual assent. The sources of our conflicts about being an Adult Baby go deep into our psyche. I believe we have to discover and understand its roots before we can fully accept ourselves.

So, the journey of self-acceptance involves:

1. Understanding the conflict within us
2. Discovering what behaviours are driven by our internal conflict
3. Discovering how the internal conflict sabotages us and sets us up for more stress and disappointment – and particularly how it sabotages other's acceptance of our baby person
4. Challenging ourselves, by confronting why we are holding onto the internal conflict and the behaviours it drives
5. Understanding the sources of our internal conflict and baby persona in our childhood experience
6. Making our peace with those childhood experiences

### 7. Building a new healthy, joyful stable Adult Baby identity.

Each of these elements need to be comprehensively discussed and understood and they lay a foundation for how we move from our destructive non-accepting nature to the complete acceptance of who we are both inside and outside.

**Dylan Lewis 2018**

**[www.abdiscovery.com.au](http://www.abdiscovery.com.au)**

**(taken from the book – Becoming Me: A Journey of Self-Acceptance)**