

Tolerations

Maroon Highlight	Class activity/engagement
<i>Italic</i>	For you to do or think about
Bold	For you to write down
Regular	For you to say
Grey Highlight	Section or subsection
Boxed	Summary

This activity gives a list of common things that undergrads/grad students tolerate when learning how to do research with three options to choose for how they feel: Great, neutral, crappy.

Note: Some students may want a sliding scale from 0-10 or more emotional granulation than “Great, neutral, crappy.” The reason why the options are limited is because many individuals may struggle with identifying their emotions (e.g. distinguishing between sad, upset, anxious, unmotivated, guilty, embarrassed, etc.) and can confuse them with judgement statements (e.g. I feel stupid vs. I feel stressed out and worried). At this stage, identifying the specific emotion is less important than grasping the general quality of that emotion (is it a “good” emotion or a “bad” emotion?). If students are curious about more granularity, you can direct them a feelings inventory such as: <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/feelings-inventory>.

(3 min) Tolerations Inventory (Individual) - This is a non-exhaustive list of common things that people tolerate when they’re learning how to do academic research. We’re going to take 3 minutes to circle any that resonate with you and identify how that particular situation makes you feel.

(5 min) Tolerations Discussion (Class) -

1. Raise your hand if you’re tolerating or have tolerated at least one of these things.
Have students keep their hands up and look around. It is likely that everyone will be raising their hands. This is to help people feel less self-conscious about grappling with these challenges together for the rest of the workshop. It also helps to normalize common but often invisible experiences.
2. Raise your hand if you circled “feeling crappy” for at least one of the things you’re tolerating?
Have them keep their hands up and look around again. Likely, all of them will have their hands raised.
3. Out of curiosity, did anyone *not* circle “feeling crappy”? This is just to show all of us that what may work for you may not work for other people, or what is not important to you may be very important to other people. If you circled “neutral” or “great” for any of the statements, then that’s probably telling you that that particular situation isn’t a high priority for you to resolve right now, and that’s ok!
Everyone has a unique set of boundaries that matter to them.
A few students may have circled “neutral” or “great” – a common one that some will circle “great” for is being in a situation where people are putting them down. For some individuals, this experience can really motivate them. Others might circle “neutral” for items such as not exercising enough.

As scientists, one of the skills that we develop is that of observation – we use observations to help us learn about what is going on in the universe. But in addition to studying the universe, it is also important to study ourselves! This is because observing how we feel can tell us important information about if we need to set a boundary or not; Many times, feeling crappy is a really useful invitation to press pause and ask ourselves: what’s not working for me right now? Do I want to be in this situation? What would I rather be cultivating in my life?

(8 min) Saying no so we can say yes (Pairs) - When we say no to something, we're giving ourselves more energy and space to say yes to something that matters more to us, and this helps us set ourselves up for successfully cultivating our gardens ☺

(4-5 min) So, let's explore what happens when we stop tolerating these situations. Turn to your partner, and for each of the situations that you're currently tolerating, reflect on what you could be saying yes to instead if stopped tolerating that situation by filling in the sentence stem:

If I stop tolerating _____, then I'll be available to _____.

For example: If I stop tolerating worrying about whether or not my professor likes me or thinks I'm good enough, then I make myself available to ask my professor for what will help me most. If you need more ideas, I give more examples at the bottom of the worksheet.

Walk around and solicit 1-2 volunteers to share their responses with the larger group. Some people might look really uncomfortable, so be clear that you are asking them for permission and they have the right to say no (explicitly being given the power to say no can be a revelation for some students. This is a good teaching moment to demonstrate how to set a boundary).

(3 min) We have a few people who have volunteered to share with the larger group what they are currently tolerating and what they'd like to focus on instead.