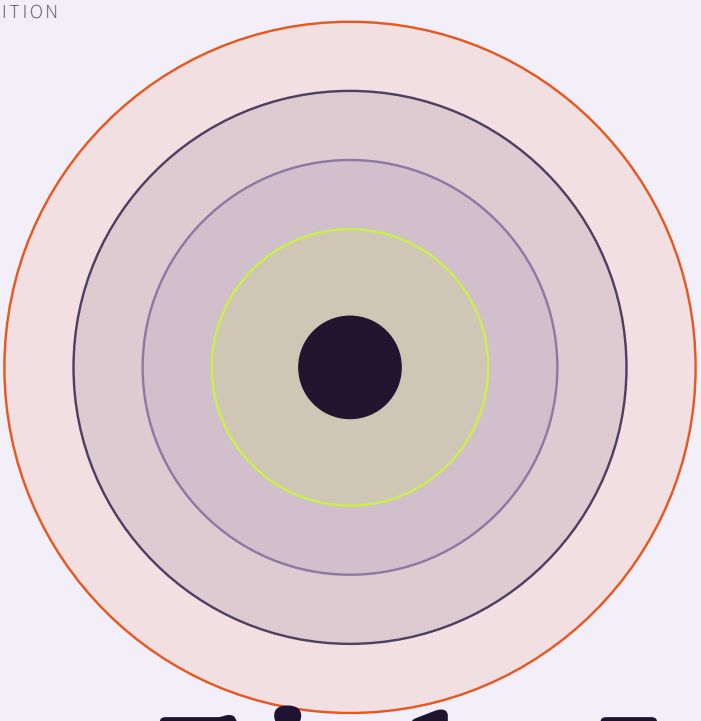


Give a F*ck, Actually: Reclaim Yourself with the 5 Steps of Radical Emotional Acceptance

A reading of the book by Alex Wills (2023)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Give a F*ck, Actually: Reclaim Yourself with the 5 Steps of Radical Emotional Acceptance, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Alex Wills is a psychiatrist with a private practice in Idaho. In this book he pushes back on the popular advice to care less, arguing that burying feelings is what keeps people stuck and that being honest about them works better. His method, Radical Emotional Acceptance, runs in five steps he calls the Five Acceptances: put down your f*ck shield, name the f*ck, listen to the f*ck, act on the f*ck, and thank the f*ck. Each step treats an emotion, painful ones included, as information about what you value rather than a fault to fix. He carries the method through stories from his patients and lessons from history.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Caring less is not the cure; pushing feelings down is what keeps you stuck.

Wills writes the book as a reply to the idea that the way to suffer less is to stop caring. In his view the feelings you refuse do not leave. They wait, and they come back louder, so the way out runs through them.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A quick flash of anger is often a shield held up in front of something softer.

The first of the five steps is to put down the shield. Anger is the classic one, because it feels strong and keeps people back. Behind it there is usually hurt, fear or disappointment, and you cannot work with those until the shield is lowered.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You can only work with a feeling once you have its real name.

Step two is naming. Words like stressed, fine or upset cover a lot of ground. Picking the precise word, such as scared, ashamed or let down, turns a fog into something you can look at, and a feelings chart helps when the word will not come.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Every emotion is data about what you value and what you assume.

Step three is listening. Instead of asking how to make a feeling stop, ask what it is pointing at. Resentment can point to a value that is being ignored, and fear can point to an assumption worth checking.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Start with the feeling, not with the case you are building for it.

When something stings, the mind rushes to explain who was right. Wills puts the feeling first and the reasoning second. The story about why you are justified can wait until you know what you actually feel.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Acting on a feeling can mean choosing to do nothing, as long as it is a choice.

Step four is acting. Sometimes that means speaking up or changing something. Sometimes the wise move is to wait. What matters is that the decision comes after you have heard the feeling, not as a reflex in the heat of it.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Thanking a painful feeling ends the war you were having with yourself.

The last step is gratitude. Once you see a hard feeling as a part of you trying to help, there is less to fight. That leaves more energy for the next decision.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

There are no bad emotions, only clumsy reactions to strong ones.

The book separates the feeling from what you do with it. Jealousy, grief or rage are not the problem in themselves. The trouble starts when they are hidden, or acted out before they are understood.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Accepting a feeling is not the same as agreeing with it or obeying it.

Radical acceptance here means letting a feeling be fully present long enough to hear it. You can accept that you feel furious and still decide not to send the message. Acceptance is the start of the process, not the verdict.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write down your shields
- [ ] Save a feelings word list
- [ ] Name five things you care about
- [ ] Run one old flare-up through all five steps
- [ ] Pick a cue for the moment it flares

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Say one precise feeling a day
- ◯ Ask what it is pointing at
- ◯ Choose your response on purpose

30 days · Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write down your shields

List the two or three reactions you reach for first when something hurts: snapping, sarcasm, going busy, going quiet.

Next to each, guess what it might be covering.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Save a feelings word list

Put a list of about thirty precise emotion words in your phone's notes, grouped by family: fear, hurt, sadness, shame, anger, joy.

Open it whenever you catch yourself saying fine.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Name five things you care about

Write down five values you would defend, such as respect, fairness or closeness.

When a feeling shows up, you can check it against this list in step three.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Run one old flare-up through all five steps

Pick a recent moment that still stings.

On paper or with the walk-through above, lower the shield, name the feeling, find the value, choose an action and write one line of thanks.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Pick a cue for the moment it flares

Choose a short question to ask yourself when the heat rises, such as: shield or feeling?

Write it on a sticky note where arguments tend to happen, or set it as your lock screen for a week.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Say one precise feeling a day

Once a day, finish the sentence I feel...

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○
7 ○	8 ○	9 ○	10 ○	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Ask what it is pointing at

When a strong feeling comes up, write one line: this tells me I care about...

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Choose your response on purpose

Before you act on a big feeling, pick one: speak up, ask for something, set a limit, wait a day, or let it pass.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

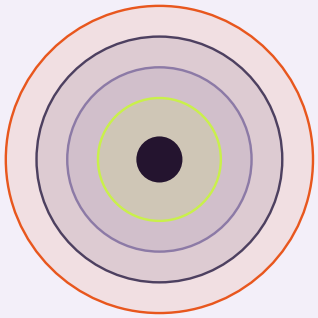
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



The feeling you keep pushing away is the one trying to tell you what matters.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER ALEX WILLS