

CBT Tip of the Week, from Dr. Lee Rosen, Ph.D.

Facing difficult feelings, tolerating contradictions, and conversations about race

If you've followed these posts, you've realized that a central intervention in CBT is nudging people toward facing difficult feelings. Afraid of something? Running away from a feeling? Acting out on feelings instead of noticing and tolerating them? Then those are the feelings we are going to move toward and explore, articulate, and learn to tolerate. So often, tolerating and facing feelings is what precedes rational action.

So, it would follow, if you are uncomfortable talking about race, then that is likely a fruitful place for exploration. Students from all our LCOM classes have shown us the way this week -- to talk about race, notice and express thoughts and feelings, share honestly, and know that is what moves us forward. One of the things that is difficult about dialogue about race is that it asks us to tolerate contradictions, which humans are not that great at. One might simultaneously feel rage and love; generosity and self-protectiveness; acceptance of human imperfection and desperate need for change. We might be passionately progressive and still contain, inside us, racism that we will, against our own desires, enact.

Sometimes I think that one of the notable markers of emotional maturity is the willingness and ability to tolerate contradictions. Cultivating this capacity allows us to explore the uncomfortable terrain. To that end, here is an [amazing infographic](#) brought to us by students from the Social Justice Coalition. Take a look and see where it might take you.