The Welcoming Prayer

You’ve heard the idea that you can’t run away from your problems; you have to confront them. The Welcoming Prayer is a method for doing this with bad feelings. The basic idea is that when you are experiencing a negative feeling, you don’t pray for it to go away, you welcome it. You don’t detach from bad feelings; you get to know them.

What we are welcoming is the Holy Spirit’s presence into everything in our lives, including our negative feelings and emotions. The Welcoming Prayer is a method of consenting to God’s presence and action in our physical and emotional reactions to events and situations in daily life. The purpose of the Welcoming Prayer is to deepen our relationship with God through inviting and allowing God into the ordinary activities of our day. The Welcoming Prayer helps to dismantle the emotional programs of the false-self system and to heal the wounds of a lifetime by addressing them where they are stored — in the body. It contributes to the process of transformation in Christ.

The prayer:

1. Gently become aware of your body and your interior state.
2. If you feel comfortable, pray the following prayer by Thomas Keating, announcing your consent to God’s action within you, and your desire to invite God into your present state:

   Welcome, welcome, welcome.
   I welcome everything that comes to me today
   because I know it’s for my healing.
   I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions.
   I let go of my desire for power and control.
   I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval and pleasure.
   I let go of my desire for survival and security.
   I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.
   I open to the love and presence of God and God’s action within.

   Amen.

3. **Focus and Sink In:** This is not about indulging bad feelings. It’s not about amplifying them or justifying them. But feel the feeling. Allow yourself to become immersed in it. Let it wash over you. Don’t run away from it or fight it. Just feel what it’s like to be experiencing it. Feel the feeling or emotion physically. Notice your body, how you are tense or anxious or hot or fidgety or lethargic. You are
just observing the feeling without judgment of yourself and without trying to change it.

4. **Welcome**: You can only start from where you are, and you can only move forward if you accept where you are. Affirm the rightness of where you are by welcoming the bad feeling or emotion, and acknowledging God’s presence in the moment. You do this literally by saying, “Welcome, [bad feeling].” If you are frozen in fear, say, “Welcome, fear.” Hot with rage: say, “Welcome, rage.”

Note: we're talking about accepting feelings and emotions, not problems, physical hardships or injustice. We are not welcoming illness or oppression. If you think you should be applying the Welcoming Prayer to a problem or illness, think again about what negative emotion or feeling is being kicked up (maybe fear or anger?).

There's nothing passive about acceptance. You are only accepting reality so that you can respond to a situation more effectively. For example, if you are terrified about a health issue, that fear may be paralyzing you; accepting it and then releasing the fear can free you to deal with the issue.

5. **Let God**: Say, “God, I give you my [fear/anger/jealousy/envy]. I let go of my desire to change this feeling.”

At this point you can turn the feeling or emotion over to God and let it go. If you haven’t truly felt it and welcomed it in, you may still experience resistance here. Stay in the letting go.