

What is ACT?
A Brief Introduction to
Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
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Attendees
Who are you?

What is ACT?
What do you already know?

ACT in Context
What is ACT?
“BF Skinner meets Carl Rogers”
“BF Skinner meets Fritz Perls”

Behavioral Activation +
Motivational Interviewing +
Mindfulness

ACT in Context
What is ACT?

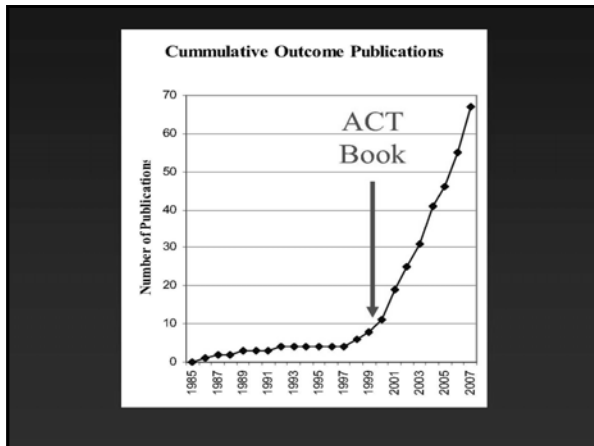
ACT is a comprehensive model of therapy
...not a set of techniques

(though includes many techniques,
some unique, but many found elsewhere)

ACT in Context
What is ACT?

Larger effectiveness & efficacy trials, large RCTs
Small studies on ACT for wide range of problems

Research on Therapeutic Processes
Basic Science of Language & Cognition
(Relational Frame Theory)
Underlying Philosophy & Assumptions



ACT in Context

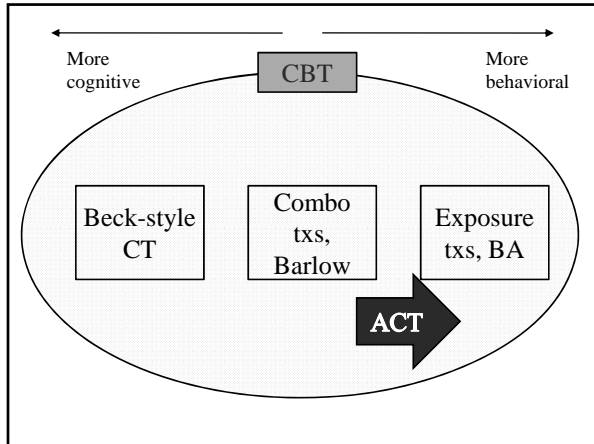
Comparison to learning
Motivational Interviewing

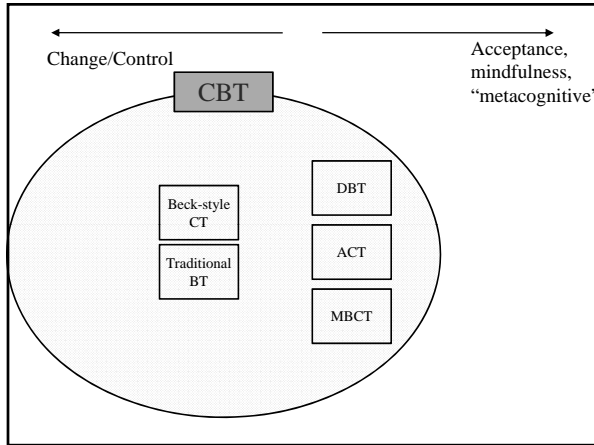
ACT in Context

ACT as a...

- Mindfulness-Based Therapy
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
Contextual Behavioral Therapy
- Clinical Behavior Analysis

Part of larger trends in the field.





Today's Workshop
*What we will cover...
...and what we will not cover*

Difficult choices

Today's Workshop
*What we will cover...
...and what we will not cover*

*We will be running this like a
workshop, not a lecture.*

Today's Workshop
What we will cover...

- Introduction to ACT
- Focus on clinical application
- "How to"
- Theory and model (cursory)
- Case examples
- Experiential exercises
(Do as you are willing....)

Today's Workshop
...and what we will not cover

- Theory and model (*in depth*)
- Philosophy & Assumptions
- Research
- ACT vs. CBT

Resources

All available to you...

- Powerpoint slides
- Handouts
- *Embrace Your Demons* by Russ Harris
- Links to much more

www.whitepineinstitute.com/mercy.htm

Today's Workshop

One major distinction between learning ACT in a workshop and doing ACT: *Here we will explain what we are doing and why.*

Doing ACT in therapy:

- You lead the client through an experience of each process *not* toward an intellectual understanding of that process.
- Model each process within your relationship with the client.

A (relatively) benign example

The Lemon &
The Glass

Normal Cognitive Processes

- Fusion
- Avoidance

Rigidity vs.
Psychological Flexibility

Less benign examples

What if we replace the lemon?

- Images and memories of a rape
- Memories of shameful acts committed
- Harsh judgments about one's self
- Certainties about one's future
- An imagined future with all its problems
- Stories about past mistakes, regrets

According to ACT (RFT):

Normal language & cognitive processes are at the heart of most suffering.

Question:

If that is true, why don't we *all* struggle with anxiety, depressed moods, insecurities, fears, etc....?

Answer:
Oh, wait...we do.

How is ACT different?

Question: But if normal language and cognitive processes are part of the problem, how do you use “talk therapy” (more language and cognition) to help?

The Short Answer: Very carefully!

- *Talking, yes, but differently.*
- *Deliberate and skillful use of a range of experiential techniques.*

Implications of the ACT Stance

Our clients are stuck, not broken or sick.

The processes that get them stuck are normal, expected “side effects” of language.

You have these processes too. If you haven’t been entangled in them yet (unlikely), you probably will be at some point.

Even knowing this, you will hand them to your children and your grandchildren.

Therapeutic Posture

- Whatever the client is experiencing is not the enemy – it's the struggle against it that's harmful
- You can't rescue clients from the difficulty and challenge of growth
- Radical respect for clients' values – the issue is the workability of their lives, not your opinions
- Never forget that you are in the same boat

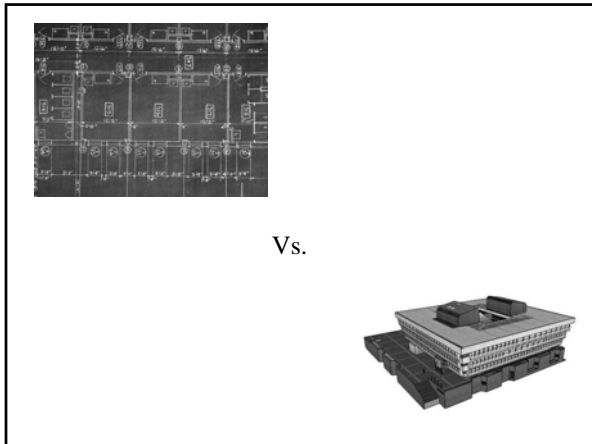
The Targets of ACT

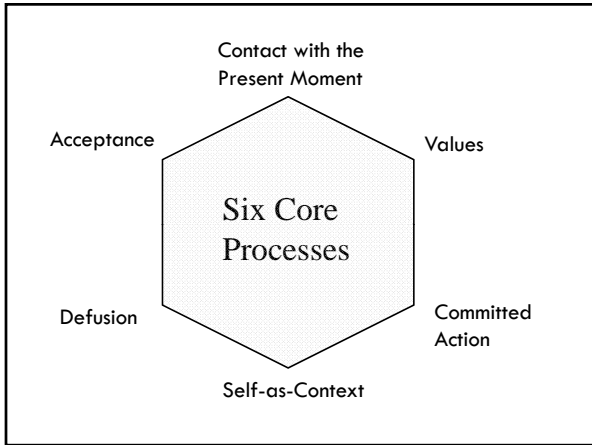
- Ineffective change agenda
- Experiential avoidance
- Inability to differentiate self and behavior from private events
- Inability to make and keep a commitment to actions consistent with valued life directions

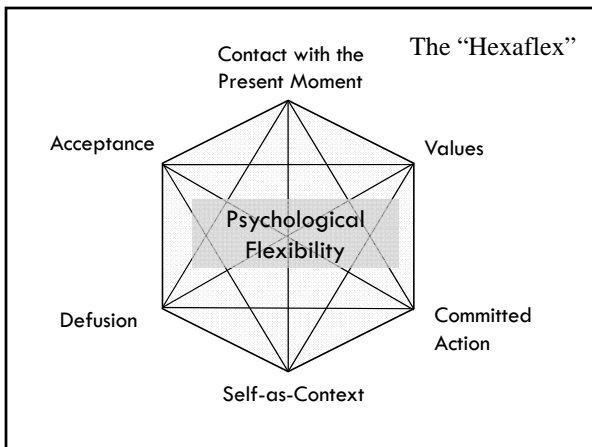
A Simpler Version of the Barriers /ACT Targets

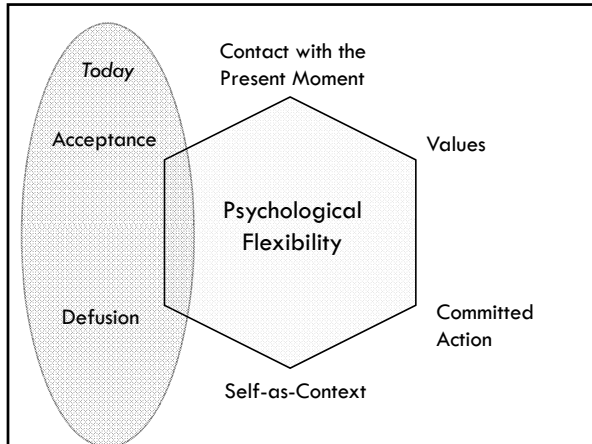
FEAR:

- Fusion
- Evaluation
- Avoidance
- Reason-Giving









ACT Processes & Interventions

Acceptance

What comes to mind?

What it is *not*:

- Tolerating, putting up with
- Resignation
- Defeat, a "less than" alternative

ACT Processes & Interventions

Acceptance

What it *is*:

- An act, a behavior, a move
- Openness, without defense
- Dropping judgment
- Dropping a useless struggle

Surrendering

ACT Processes & Interventions

Acceptance

- Tug of War
- Boxing

ACT Processes & Interventions

Acceptance

Inside Willingness (vs. Outside Willingness of Commitment)

Commitment: Be willing to do what you need to do (actual forward movement now) to live a rich full life...

Acceptance: Be willing to experience whatever shows up (privately) as you take those steps forward.

ACT Processes & Interventions

Acceptance

- “Sitting with” the feeling
- Exposure
- Quicksand Metaphor

ACT Processes & Interventions

Acceptance

- Thought Card
- Ball and Chain
- Chinese Handcuffs

ACT Processes & Interventions

Cognitive Defusion

Emo Philips:

I used to think that the brain was the most wonderful organ in my body....

Then I realized who was telling me this.

ACT Processes & Interventions

Cognitive Defusion

- Learning to watch what our mind tells us
- See thoughts as what they are – images, bits of language
- Falling Leaves
- Voices (singing, caricature)

ACT Processes & Interventions
Cognitive Defusion

- *Addictive Voice*
- *Angel & Devil on shoulders*

ACT Processes & Interventions
Cognitive Defusion

- Hand exercise
- Fish in water
- Identify the forms of private experience

Cognitive Defusion

More simple techniques:

- Just notice what your mind is telling you right now
Is this a helpful thought? Is this a good use of my time?
- Notice the form of the thought by describing it
Is it words, sounds or pictures? What does it sound like?
- "That is an interesting thought"
- Label your thoughts ("I am having the thought that . . .")
- Thank your mind
- Mind vs Experience ("workability" not "truth")

What is ACT?

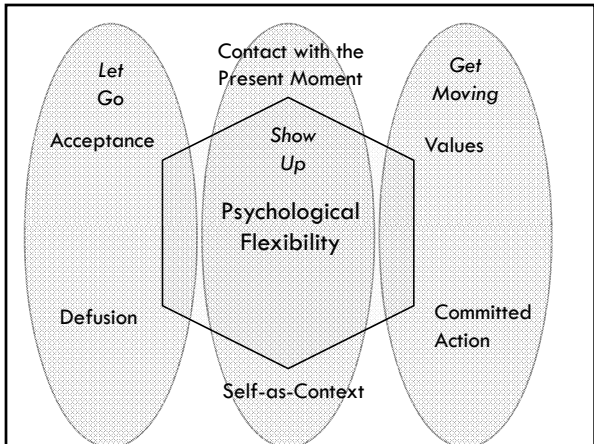
ACT Said Simply:

ACT uses acceptance and mindfulness processes, and commitment and behavior change processes, to produce greater psychological flexibility.

What is ACT?

ACT Said Even More Simply:

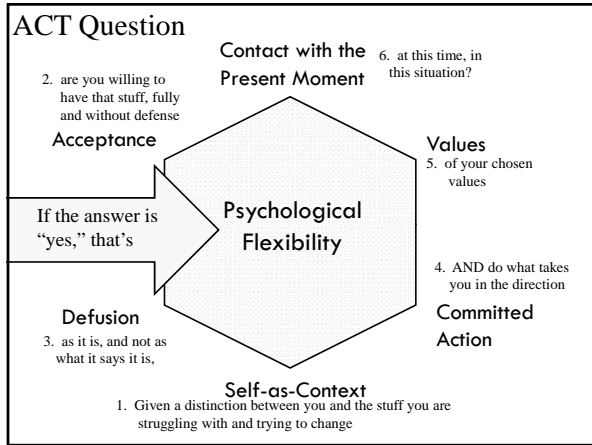
- Show Up
- Let Go
- Get Moving

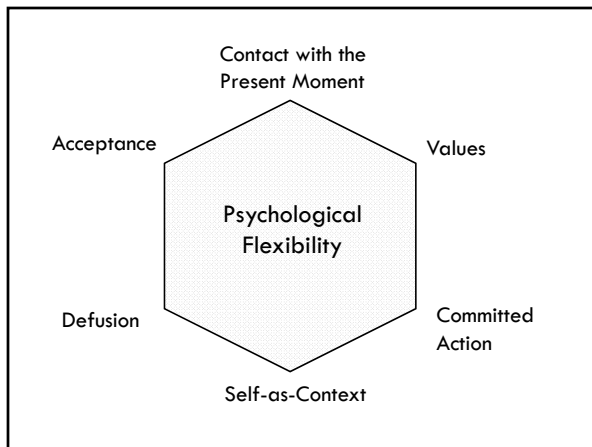


*One more time:
What is ACT?*

Summarized in one sentence:

*Living a rich, full life
with less struggle.*





Case Study #1

- *Presentation*
- *Client's goals*
- *ACT conceptualization*
- *ACT goals*
- *Interventions*
- *Discussion*

Case Study #2

- *Presentation*
- *Client's goals*
- *ACT conceptualization*
- *ACT goals*
- *Interventions*
- *Discussion*

*Values
Exercise*

Questions?

Additional Resources

- Materials from today's workshop:
www.whitepineinstitute.com/mepa.htm
- ACT is non-proprietary and "open source"
- www.contextualpsychology.org
- Join ACBS! *Values-Based Dues*
- Listserv for professionals and public
- www.ACTinNewEngland.com

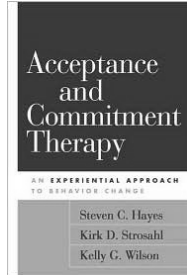
Additional Resources

Books!

- Your local bookstore!
- Context Press (www.contextpress.com)
- New Harbinger (www.newharbinger.com)
- Amazon (www.amazon.com)

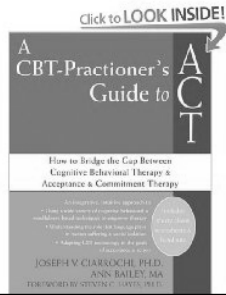
Additional Resources

*Acceptance & Commitment Therapy:
An Experiential Approach to
Behavior Change*
Steven Hayes, Kelly Wilson,
Kirk Strosahl



Additional Resources

*A CBT-Practitioner's
Guide to ACT*
Joseph Ciarrochi &
Ann Bailey



Additional Resources

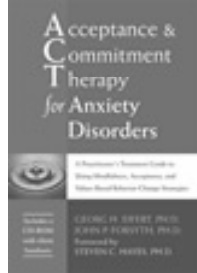
Learning ACT
Jason B. Luoma, Steven C. Hayes,
Robyn D. Walser



Additional Resources

*Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
for Anxiety Disorders*

Georg H. Eifert, John P. Forsyth



Additional Resources