**Content**

- What is ACT?
- Core Principles of ACT and how to use them
- Worksheets
- Book recommendations

**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

**ACCEPT-CHOOSE-TAKE ACTION**

**What is ACT?**

- ACT was founded by Steven C. Hayes, Kelly G. Wilson and Kirk Strosahl in the 1980’s
- ACT is the “third wave” of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): It is based on relational frame theory (RFT), a comprehensive theory of language and cognition that is an offshoot of behaviour analysis.

**What is ACT?**

Aim of ACT:

- Teaching us psychological skills to handle painful thoughts and feelings effectively
- To clarify, what is truly important and meaningful to us. Once we have identified our values, we then can implement value driven actions and goals.
- Goal:
  
  “To create a rich and meaningful life, while accepting the pain that life inevitably brings”
Practical Tools

How to use these core principles in dealing with MS?

1st Core Principle: Contact with present moment (Mindfulness)

Mindfulness = State of awareness, whereby the person participates fully and effectively in the present moment.

5 Mental Strategies: notice, non-judgemental approach, participate, one-mind, be effective

Mindfulness- Practice

- Mindful breathing exercise
- Mindful drinking/eating
- Mindful walking
- Mindful visualization
- Mindful touch
- Mindful daily tasks (e.g. washing up, brushing teeth)

2nd Core Principle: Chosen Values (Know what matters)

- What do you want your life to stand for?
- What sort of person do you want to be?
- What sort of relationships do you want to build?
- How do you want to act/behave in the world/ towards others/ towards yourself?
- What do you want to do with your life?

3rd Core Principle: Committed Action (Do what it takes)

“Take effective action, guided by your values. Follow your internal value compass and set one foot after the other to reach your destination of a rich and meaningful life.”
4th Core Principle:
Self-as-Context (Pure Awareness)

Mind = Thinking Self + Observing Self

Thinking Self = Generating thoughts, beliefs, memories, judgments, fantasies, etc.

Observing Self = We are aware of our thinking self. Example: I am aware that I am thinking. -> “Bird’s eye perspective”.

5th Core Principle:
Thought Defusion (“Watch your thinking”)

“Step back” and separate or detach from your thoughts, images and memories. We see our thoughts for what they are – nothing more or less than words or pictures.
“Defused - seeing your emotion and every thing else around you”

5th Core Principle: Thought Defusion- Unhelpful Thinking Patterns in people with MS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>What it is</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black and White thinking</td>
<td>Thinking in terms of all or nothing, one extreme to the other.</td>
<td>e.g. “My whole life is bad because I have MS.”</td>
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<td>“Should” statements</td>
<td>Setting unrealistic expectations and living by fixed inflexible rules. Living by “shoulds” “musts” and “ought to” often leads to disappointment &amp; guilt when you fail.</td>
<td>e.g. “I should be working as hard as I can and push through my physical boundaries (e.g. fatigue).”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labeling/ Name Calling</td>
<td>An extreme form of overgeneralisation where instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself.</td>
<td>“I am stupid for not managing my MS better.”</td>
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6th Core Principle: Acceptance/Willingness – Open up

Open up and make room for painful feelings, sensations, urges and emotions. Instead of fighting them, resisting them, running from them, we open up to them and let them be.

This doesn’t mean that we have to like or want them! ;)

Goal: Emotional Flexibility/Vitality

Intellectual property of ACBS, R.Harris, S. Hayes, K.Strosahl, and K.Wilson
Worksheets

- Present Moment/Mindfulness: Mindfulness Worksheet
- Chosen Values: Lundgren’s Bull’s Eye Exercise
- Committed Action: Commitment Exercise
- Self-as-Context: Self-as-Context Exercise
- Thought Defusion: Summary of Defusion Exercises-Thoughts
- Acceptance: ACT monitoring worksheet, Common Acceptance Techniques

Where can I find a ACT therapist?

- http://contextualscience.org/
- If you are looking generally for a clinical psychologist, please feel free to talk with your GP! Through you GP you can get a Mental Health Care Plan that allows you to see a clinical psychologist for 10 sessions per calendar year.

Book recommendations


References

- Many thanks to the ACT community for sharing their knowledge and resources! 😊
- http://contextualscience.org/

Thank you! 😊