Acceptance & Commitment Therapy for depression

combining mindfulness and behavioural psychology to promote effective living

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Overview

• The historical and conceptual roots of ACT

• An overview of the model

• An ACT approach to mindfulness

• Application to depression

• Conceptual aspects of the relationship between ACT and other therapies
A history lesson…

• Behaviourism as a rejection of introspection

• Flavours of behaviourism

• Radical behaviourism = everything is behaviour

• Sensibilities of humanism, Buddhism,
The ACT model

• Is not a mind model

• Is a model of 6 interdependent and overlapping behavioural processes that help us to answer:

• What is influencing behaviour in this moment?
The ACT model

“ACT is a therapy approach that uses Acceptance & Mindfulness processes and Commitment and Behaviour Change processes to produce greater psychological flexibility”

Hayes et. al., 2004
The ACT model

• “Psychological flexibility is the ability to contact the present moment more fully as a conscious human being and to either change behaviour or persist, when doing so serves valued ends”.

Wilson & Murrell, 2005
The ACT model: Psychological Inflexibility

- Dominance of Past & Future
  - Experiential avoidance
  - Cognitive Fusion
- Lack of clarity or contact with Values
  - Inaction, impulsivity or avoidant persistence
- Attachment to the self ‘story’

Psychological inflexibility
The ACT model: Psychological Flexibility

Psychological Flexibility

- Willingness / Acceptance
- Cognitive Defusion
- Contact with the present moment
- Flexible Perspective
- Taking on our Stories
- Clarity and contact with Personal Values
- Committed Actions towards Values
Focus on workability

• Much less interested in ‘causes’ of depression

• More interested in how people respond to depression

• Conceptualises the responses people make as ‘strategies for living’
Focus on workability

• Validating, compassionate stance: you are not broken…

• Are the strategies you are using working?

• Letting go of strategies that don’t work and finding other strategies
Focus on values

• What do you most care about?

• If you were free to choose…. 

• Overarching life directions 

• Specific steps linked to directions
Mindfulness and acceptance

• Use of mindfulness, defusion and willingness to behave flexibly when obstacles arise

• To change or persist
Depression

• Lack of pleasure / low motivation: unhooking feelings as reasons for action

• Pessimism and self criticism: unhooking thoughts as reasons for action

• Rumination: identifying ‘verbal problem solving’ as an unworkable strategy
Depression

• Holding our ‘stories’ more lightly

• Specific commitments: to self, others, freely chosen.

• Connection to values is part of the work
ACT & CBT

Trees

Pines

Oaks
ACT & CBT

Family of cognitive and behavioural therapies

Cognitive Therapy

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
ACT & CBT

Family of cognitive and behavioural therapies

MBCT

Cognitive Therapy

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
ACT & Other Therapies

Techniques & Interventions

Concepts & Theory

Philosophical Assumptions

Techniques & Interventions

Concepts & Theory

Philosophical Assumptions
Further reading

Dr Russ Harris, (2007), Constable Robinson, available on Amazon

Also:
Behavior Therapy
Special Series, Edited by David M. Fresco:

Theories and Directions in Behavior Therapy: