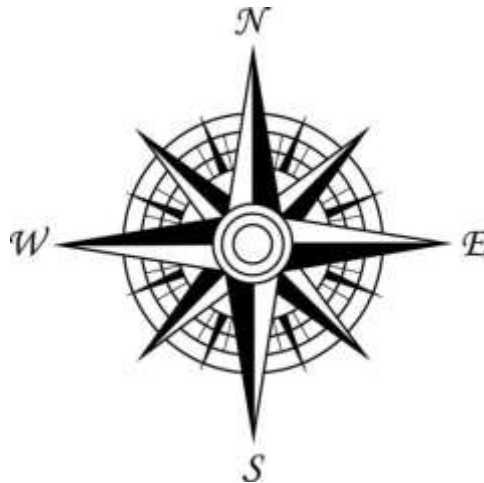


UNC School of Social Work Clinical Institute Series

2-Day Intensive Training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) April 17 & 18, 2015



Presented by: Rhonda M. Merwin, PhD

Peer-Reviewed ACT Trainer, Association of Contextual and Behavioral Science (ACBS)

ACT at Duke

www.actatduke.org

Other Resources:

www.contextualscience.org

Some materials contained here are available through membership in ACBS.

www.actcarolinas.com

Accept – then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as though you had chosen it. -Eckhart Tolle

Overview of Training

In Day 1, we will use a combination of didactic and experiential learning methods to introduce the ACT model. Clinicians will learn the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of ACT and practice conceptualizing cases from this perspective. They will be oriented to the 6 ACT processes (acceptance, defusion, present moment and self-as-context, and values and committed action) that promote meaningful behavior change. Day 2 will focus on enhancing clinicians' flexibility and effectiveness in the domain of emotional experiencing. Clinicians will learn how acceptance is supported by the other ACT processes, and how to enhance clients' willingness to experience difficult emotions in the service of greater life vitality. Day 2 will rely heavily on demonstration and practice, and "real" play.

Tentative Schedule

Day 1

| | |
|------------|--|
| 12:30-1:00 | Check in |
| 1:00-3:00 | Overview of the ACT model and Case Formulation |
| 3:00-3:15 | Break |
| 3:15-4:45 | Practice Case Formulation and Introduction to Core Processes |

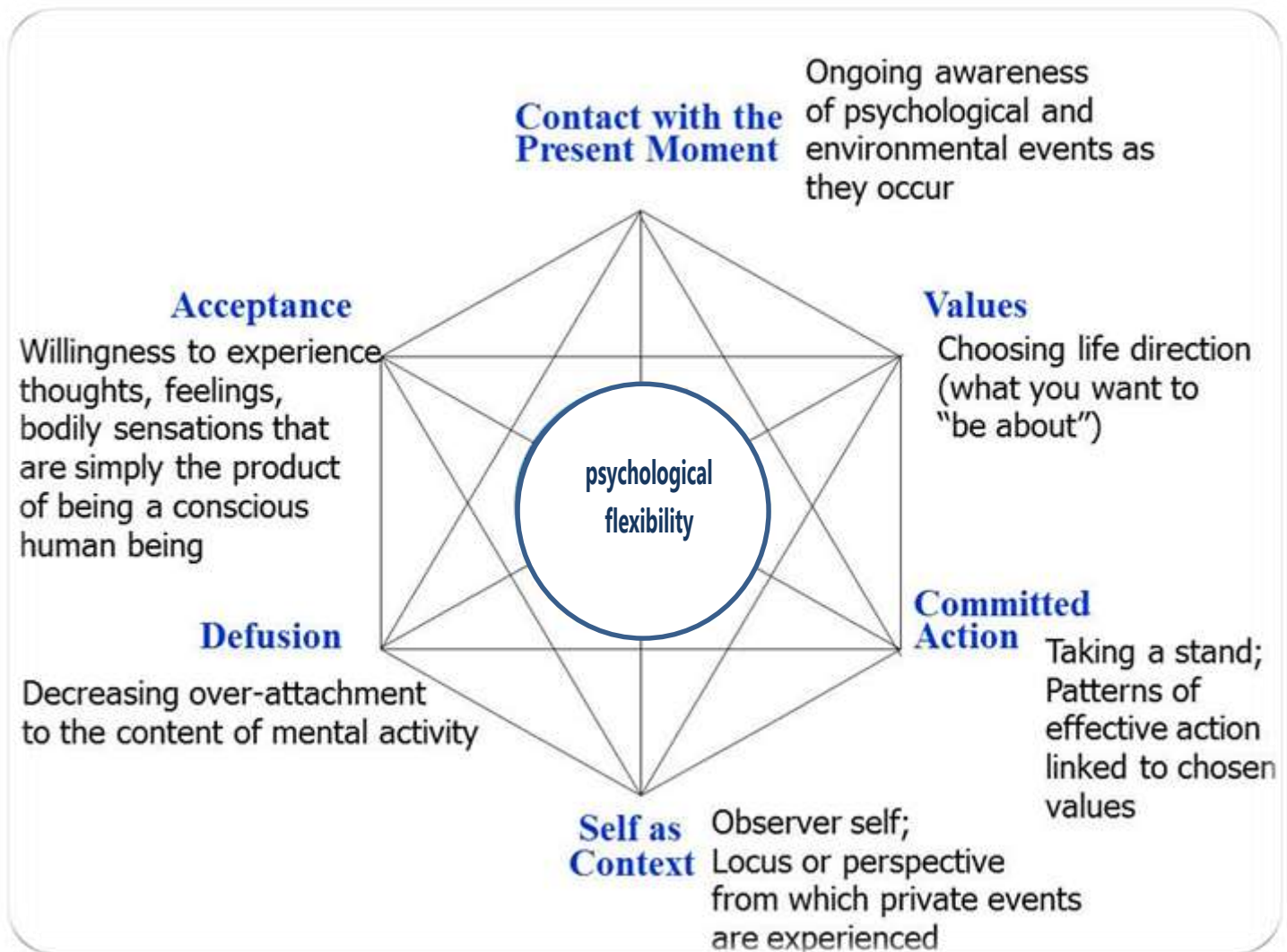
Day 2

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 8:30-9:00 | Check in |
| 9:00-10:30 | Creating conditions for change (creative hopelessness/control is the problem/willingness is the alternative) |
| 10:30-10:45 | Break |
| 10:45-12:00 | Recontextualizing painful private experiences with values; Shaping broader patterns of acceptance and willingness |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:30 | Freeing clients from their thoughts (decreasing needless suffering and defusing barriers to change) |
| 2:30-2:45 | Break |
| 2:45-4:00 | Strengthening the observer self (separate from thoughts and feelings); Final discussion |

Psychological Flexibility

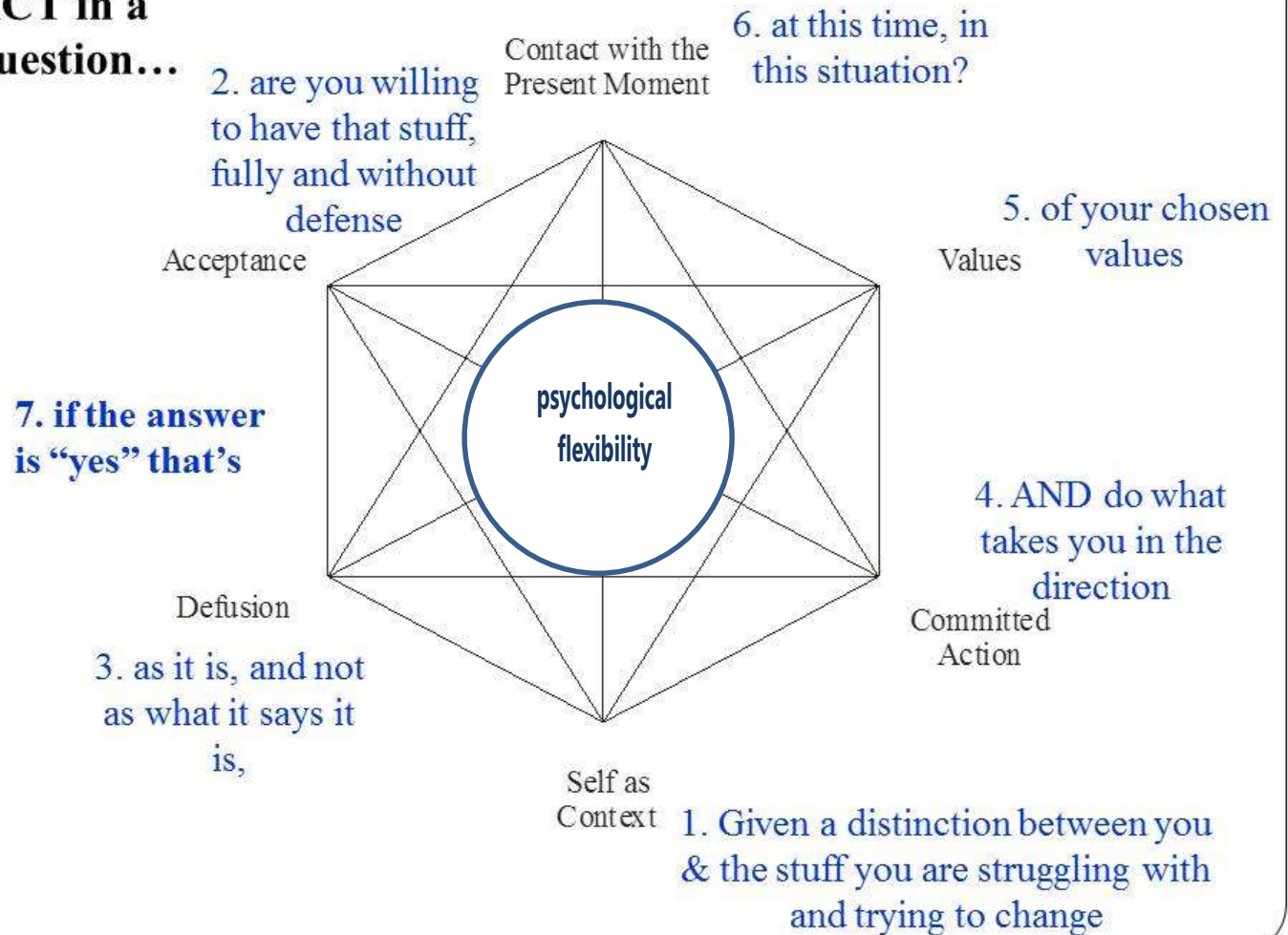
The ability to contact the present moment fully as a conscious human being and, given what the environment affords, cease or persist in behaviors that would be effective given deeply held, personal values

Components of the Model

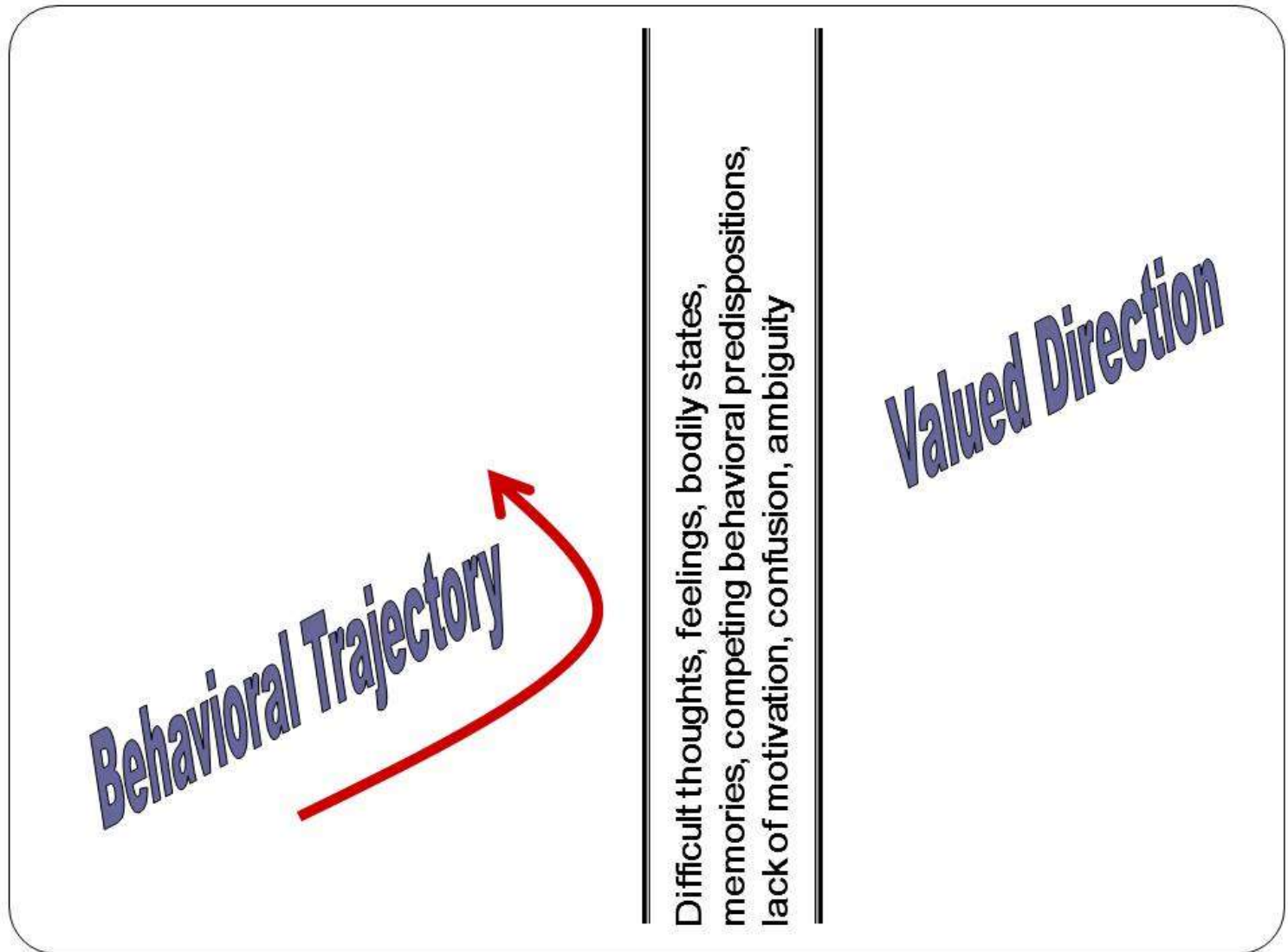


The Willingness Question

ACT in a question...



Basic Case Formulation 1 of 2



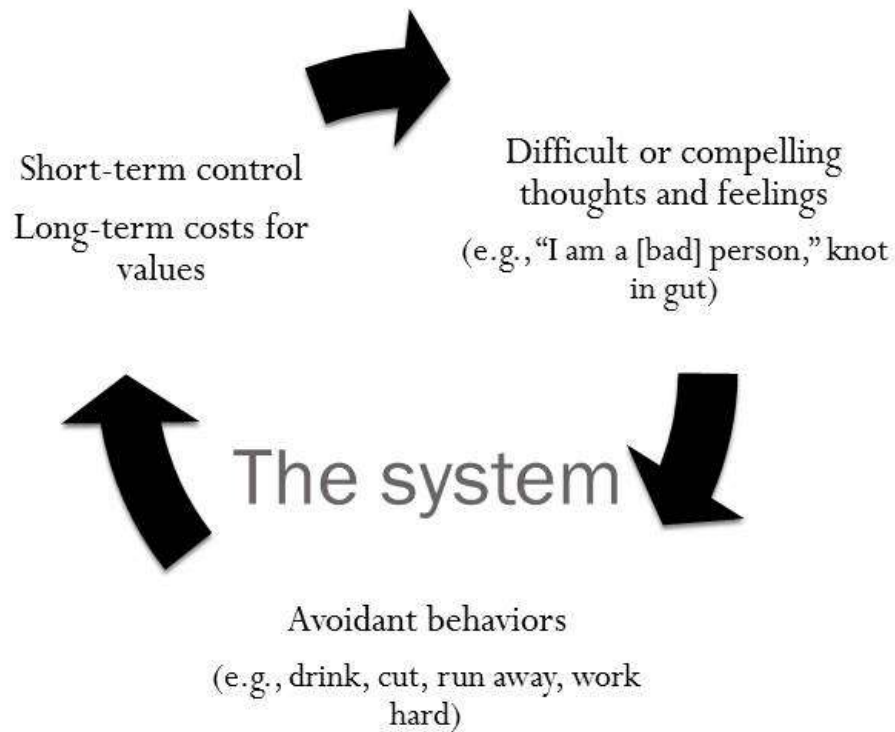
Clients are taught to ACT:

1. Accept
2. Choose
3. Take Action

Between and within sessions:

1. Choose (a valued direction)
2. Move (committed action)
3. Acceptance/Defusion (of thoughts/feelings that function as barriers)

Basic Case Formulation 2 of 2



Informed by historical and current context, in session behavior

A. Functional Classes

1. Avoided Events

Thoughts, feelings, body sensations, urges, memories, etc. that are evaluated as negative, unwanted, intolerable, feared and functionally related to problem behaviors

2. Avoidant Repertoire

- Begin with target behaviors as defined by the client or others; diagnosis
- Include overt behavioral avoidance (avoidance of people, places, situations)
- Include overt behaviors that aim to change the form, frequency or intensity of a thought or feeling (e.g., obvious, like using substances, and less so, like complying to minimize conflict)
- Include covert actions (e.g., planning, problem-solving, intellectualizing, worrying, etc.)
- Inaction is action

B. Costs

- What has the individual lost b/c of avoidance and control?
- What has the individual not had the opportunity for b/c of avoidance and control?
- How much energy is expended in avoidance/control that could be invested in meaningful life activity?

C. Barriers

- Beliefs of what is possible/not possible
- History of control working
- Sense of deserving suffering
- Concern for what “letting this go” would mean (who would be made right, how much time has been lost, what risks would have to be taken)
- Skill deficits (e.g., individual avoids conflict because lacks assertiveness skills; avoids emotions because unclear what they are feeling etc.)
- Other direct functions (e.g., financial incentives, increased care-taking from others)

Exercise

Consider an issue that you struggle with most.

What are the relevant thoughts and feelings?

What is your posture with respect to these thoughts and feelings (are you holding tightly, pushing away)

What does this look like (behaviorally)? or What do you do in response to these thoughts and feelings?

What is the short-term result? What are the long-term costs?

Exercise

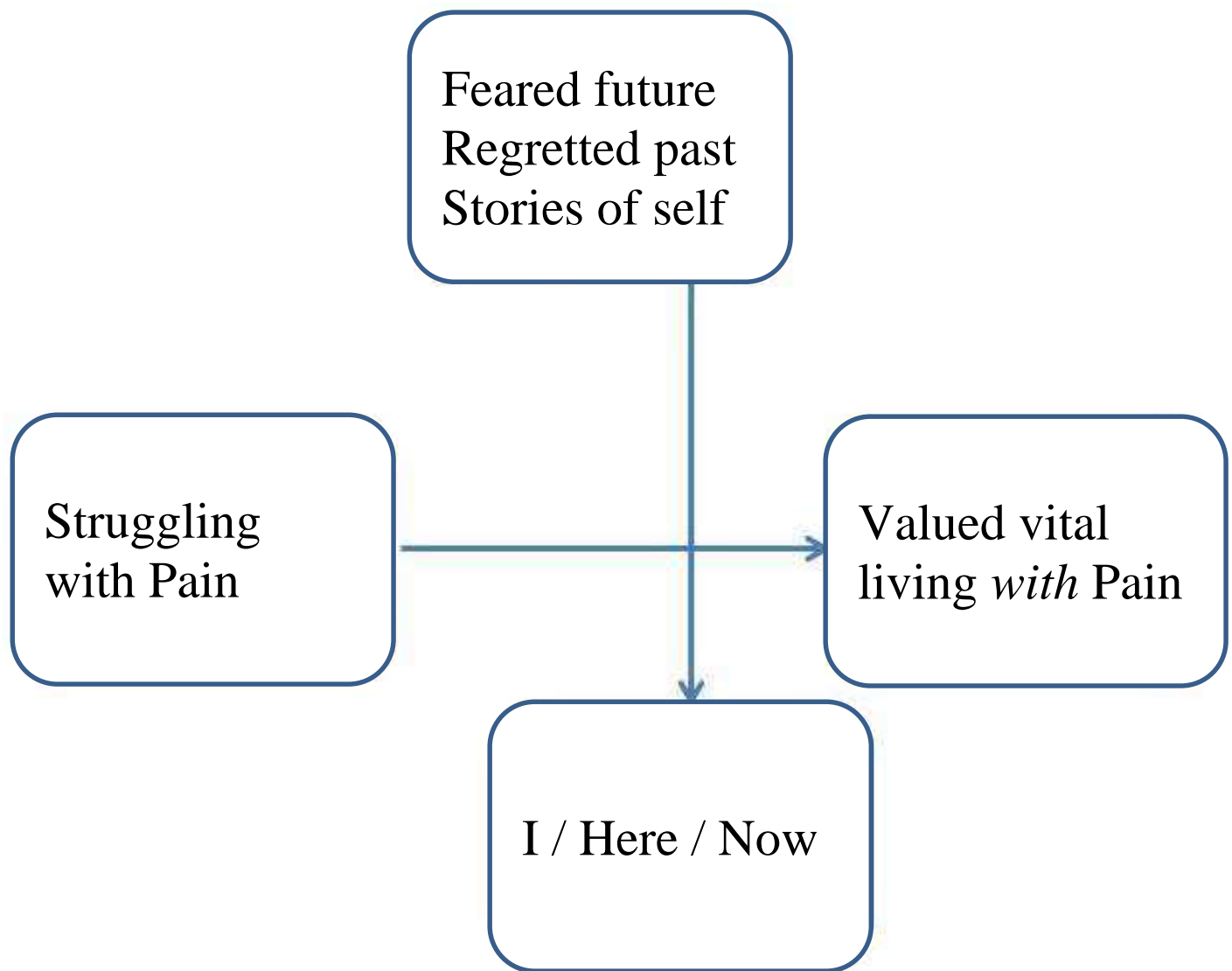
Are there some emotions that are easier for you than others? Why? What beliefs make this emotion difficult? (beliefs = fusion)

When is the emotion most likely to show up? (in a valued context?)

This is what I value...

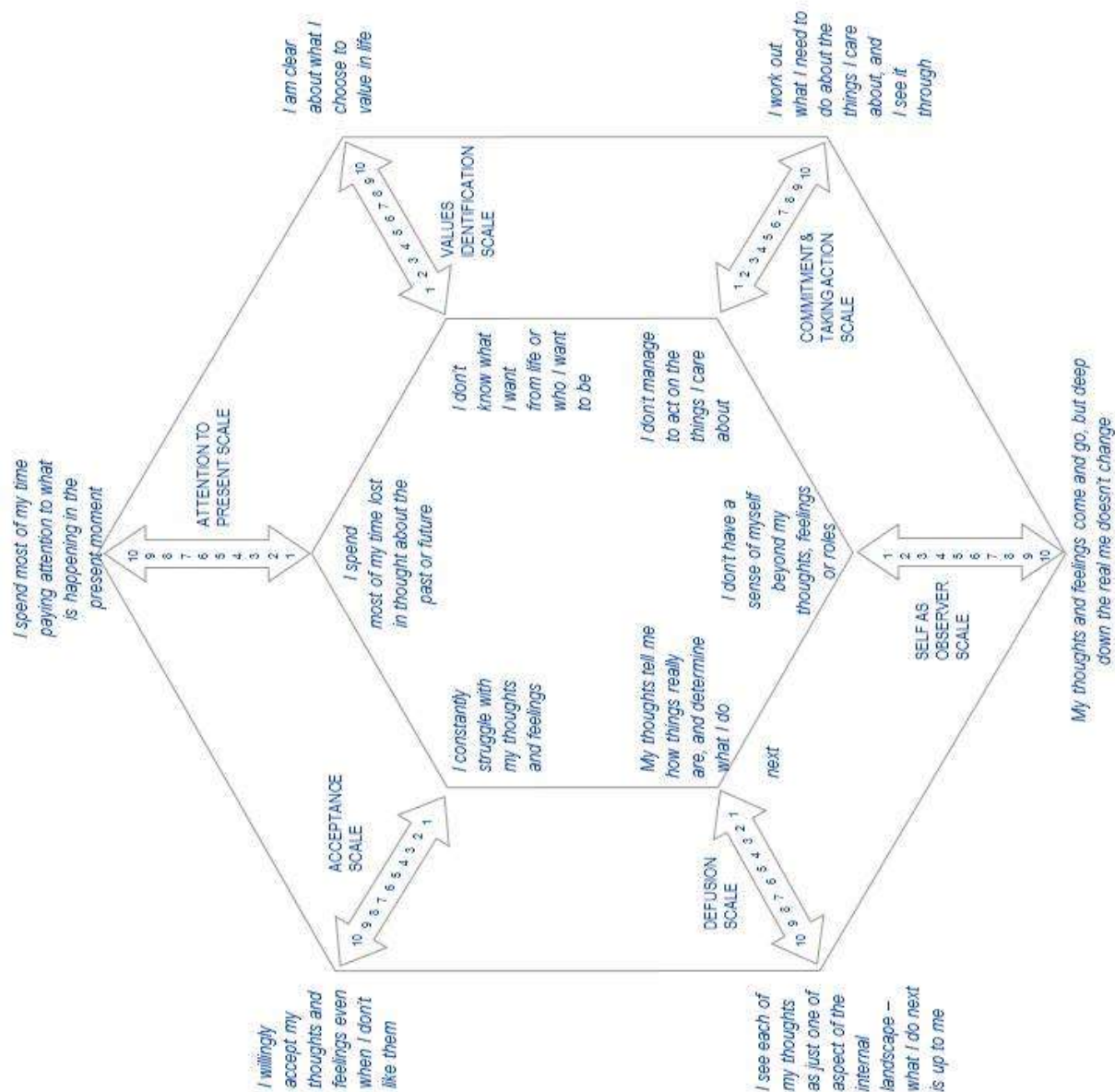
This is what has been getting in the way of that...

This is what I commit to... _____



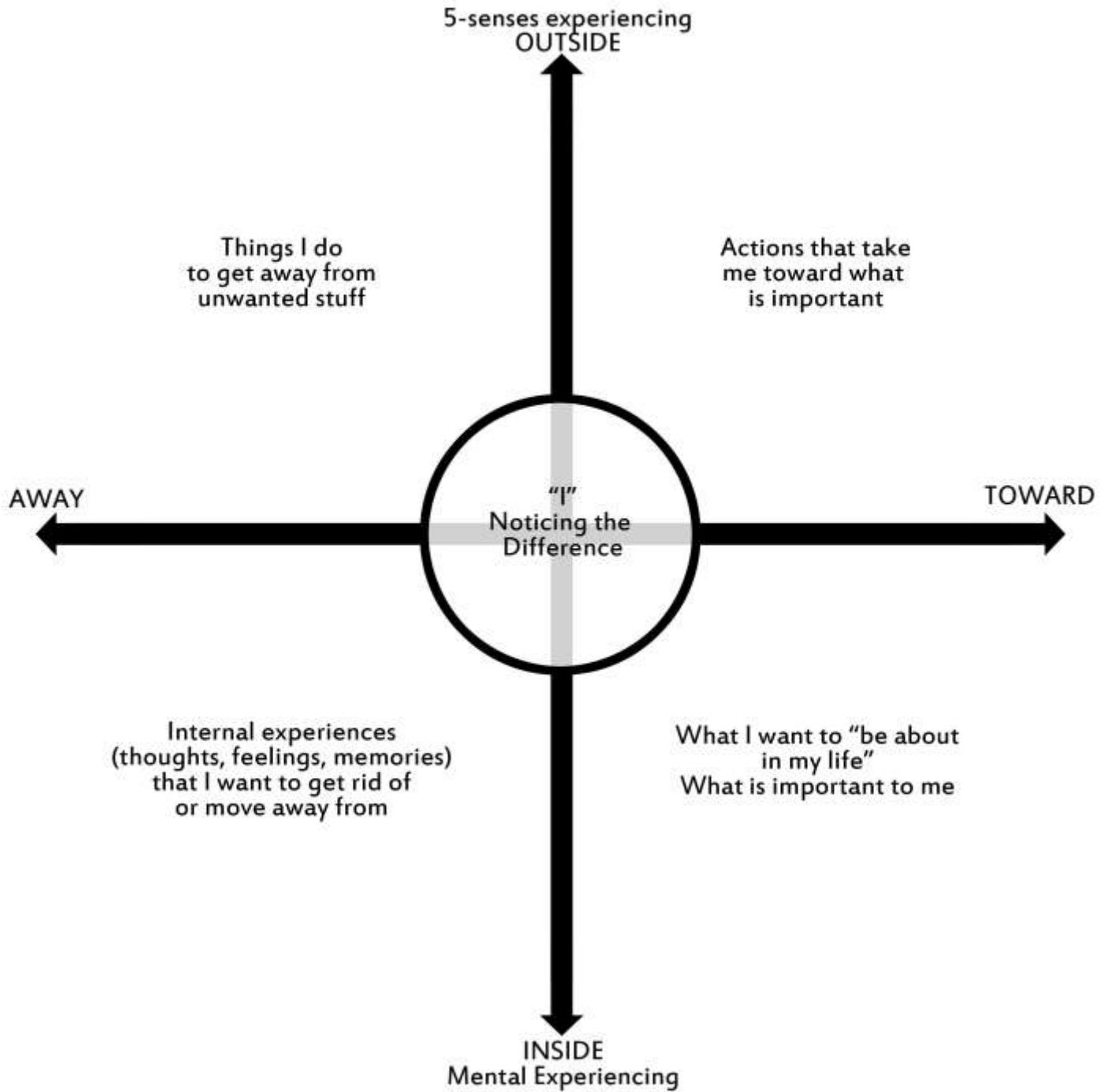
ACT Advisor

(Source: ACBS, modified)



The ACT Matrix

(Source: Polk, modified)



Open to Experience



The best thing to do when it is raining is let it rain.
- Longfellow

Notice that the stiffest tree is the most easily cracked while the bamboo or willow survives by bending with the wind. –Bruce Lee

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf. - Joseph Goldstein

Fear doesn't go away but you walk toward fear naked and the gate opens. –Starhawk



Centered or Aware

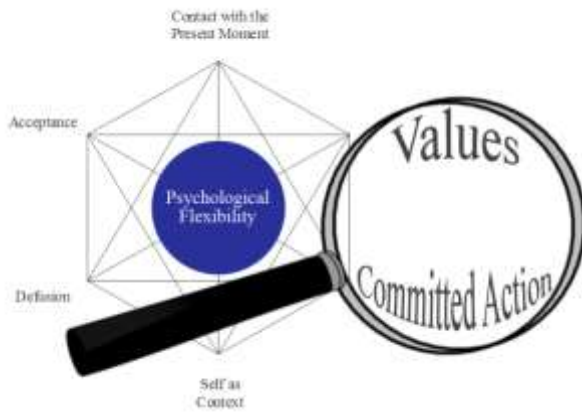
The mystery of life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced. -Zen Saying

The self must know stillness before it can discover it's true song. -Unknown

Our one true home is in the present moment. — Thich Nhat Hanh

Do not look back in anger, or forward in fear, but around in awareness. - James Thurber

Engaged



“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes it is a quiet voice saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’” -Mary Anne Radmacher

Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall. — Confucius

Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. — Gandhi

Notes:

(Source: ACBS, modified)

Creating Conditions for Change

Drawing out the system/creative hopelessness/control is the problem/willingness is the alternative

Purpose: To notice that there is a change agenda in place and notice the basic unworkability of that system; to name the system as inappropriately applied control strategies; to examine why this does not work

Method: Draw out what things the client has tried to make things better, examine whether or not they have truly worked in the client's experience, and create space for something new to happen.

Things to avoid: Never try to convince the client: their experience is the absolute arbiter. The goal is not a feeling state; it is what the Zen tradition calls "being cornered."

Examples of techniques:

| | |
|---|---|
| What brought you into treatment? | Bring into sessions sense of being stuck, strange loops |
| Person in the hole | The solution is unworkable, not the person |
| Chinese handcuffs | The way out is in |
| Quicksand | Maximizing contact frees you |
| Tug of war with a monster | The harder you pull, the harder it pulls back |
| Closet full of stuff | You have to work hard to keep the door closed |
| Cards thrown | All your energy is invested |
| Clear out old to make room for new | Field full of dead trees that need to be burned down for new trees to grow; garden with weeds |
| Break down reliance on old agenda | Old, familiar |
| Paradox | Confusion means the possibility of something new |
| Feedback screech metaphor | It's not the noise that is the problem, it's the amplification |
| Rule of private events | "If you aren't willing to have it, you've got it." |
| Fall in love, jelly doughnut, what are the numbers? | Illusion of control metaphors |
| Two scales metaphor | Willingness vs. control |
| Values deflection | Costs of low willingness |
| Polygraph metaphor | When the stakes are high, control is even more difficult |

Cognitive Defusion (Deliteralization)

Purpose: To decrease over-attachment to the content of mental activity when it increases suffering or interferes with effective action. To see thoughts as what they are, not as what they say they are.

Method: Structure seeing the process of thinking, notice the automaticity and the ease of programming, the arbitrary nature of content and the overextension of the mind into areas of life where it is not helpful. Interact with thoughts in ways other than literal. Create a stance of mindful observation and let experience be the guide.

Things to Avoid: Relying on didactic rather than experiential methods (i.e., telling clients what defusion is rather than creating a context in which they can experience defusion). Evaluating thoughts as logical/illogical, rational/irrational, or true/untrue (directly or subtly). The only measure is “workability” of the actions that the thoughts would dictate. **Poor timing will be a therapeutic “miss.”**

Examples of techniques

| | |
|--|---|
| ‘The Mind’ | Treat “the mind” as an external event; almost as a separate person |
| Mental appreciation | Thank your mind; show aesthetic appreciation for its products |
| Cubbyholing | Label private events (kind or function) |
| “I’m having the thought that ...” | Employ language conventions that differentiate the “I” from the thought or feeling |
| Just noticing | Use the language of observation when talking about thoughts |
| “Buying” or “hooked by” thoughts | Use active language to empower choice or highlight the issue is how one relates to the thought; also distinguishes thoughts and beliefs |
| Titchener’s repetition | Repeat the difficult thought until you can hear it |
| Physicalizing | Describe the physical dimensions of thoughts |
| Make an object | Sit next to the client and put each thought and experience out in front of you both as an object |
| Leaves on a stream (or similar) | Watching thoughts without involvement |
| Bad news radio | Play an announcer |
| Focused mindfulness | Direct attention to nonliteral dimensions of experience |
| Sound it out | Say difficult thoughts very, very slowly |
| Sing it out | Sing your thoughts (or make up poetry) |
| Silly voices | Say your thoughts in other voices – Charlie brown’s teacher |
| Experiential seeking | Openly seek out more material, especially if it is difficult |
| Polarities | Strengthen the evaluative component of a thought and watch it pull its opposite |
| Arrogance of word | Try to instruct nonverbal behavior |
| Think the opposite | Engage in behavior while trying to command the opposite |
| Your mind is not your friend | Suppose your mind is mindless; who do you trust, your experience or your mind |
| Who would be made wrong by that? | If a miracle happened and this cleared up without any change in (list reasons), who would be made wrong by that? |
| Thoughts are not causes | “Is it possible to think that thought, as a thought, AND do x?” |
| Choose being right or choose being alive | If you have to pay with one to play for the other, which do you choose? |
| There are four people in here | Open strategize how to connect when minds are listening |
| Monsters on the bus | Treating scary private events as monsters on a bus you are driving |
| Who is in charge here? | Treat thoughts as bullies; use colorful language |

| | |
|--|---|
| Carry baggage | Represents conceptualized history |
| Take your mind for a walk | Walk behind the client chattering mind talk while they choose where to walk |
| How old is this? | Step out of content and notice at the process level how long thoughts have hung around, etc. |
| And what is that in the service of? | Step out of content and ask this question |
| OK, you are right. Now what? | Take “right” as a given and focus on action |
| Mary had a little | Say a common phrase and leave out the last word; link to automaticity of thoughts the client is struggling with |
| Get off your butts | Replace virtually all self-referential uses of “but” with “and” |
| What are the numbers? | Teach a simple sequence of numbers and then (playfully) harass the client regarding the arbitrariness and yet permanence of this mental event |
| Why, why, why? | Show the shallowness of causal explanations by repeatedly asking “why” |
| Create a new story | Write down the normal story, then repeatedly integrate those facts into other stories |
| Find a free thought | Ask client to find a free thought, unconnected to anything |
| Do not think “x” | Specify a thought not to think and notice that you do |
| Find something that can’t be evaluated | Look around the room and notice that every single thing can be evaluated negatively |

Acceptance

Purpose: Allow yourself to have whatever inner experiences are present when doing so foster effective action.

Method: Reinforce approach responses to previously aversive inner experiences, reducing motivation to behave avoidantly (altering negatively reinforced avoidant patterns).

Things to avoid: Gritting teeth/white knuckling, passive saying “yes” to experience (acceptance is active), resignation. Remember to titrate accordingly. **Poor timing will be a therapeutic “miss.”**

Examples of techniques (techniques from creating conditions of change are also acceptance building)

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Observing emotional waves | Watch emotion rise and fall naturally; stand on the beach rather than surf the wave |
| Control is the problem | Unworkability (rule of private events); traumatic deflection (distracts and derails) |
| Card file | Client pulls “cards” of memories of previous times in which he was avoidant. Imagines it stretching into the future. What if it were to go just like this... |
| Cards thrown (or tug of war) | Cards with unwanted thoughts/feelings are thrown at the client while they try to “keep them away.” Illustrates energy invested; what is it like to let your hands be free? What would you do if they were free? |
| Experiential awareness | Learn to pay attention to internal experiences, and to how we respond to them |
| A gem, a baby, a treasure | Painful feelings are described as something treasured/valued/held gently |
| Two-sided coin | Painful feelings and values are inexplicably tied, you can’t toss one without tossing the other |
| Leaning down the hill | Changing the response to material – <i>toward</i> the fear not away |
| Amplifying experience | Bring into awareness, allow it to grow |
| In vivo exposure | Structure and encourage intensive experiencing in session; block avoidant behavior that shows up |
| The Serenity Prayer | Grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change.... |
| Carry your keys | Assign difficult thoughts and experiences to the clients’ keys. Ask the client to think the thought as a thought each time the keys are handled, and then carry them from there |
| Carry cards | Write difficult thoughts on 3 x 5 cards and carry them into the day – read them at times when it is most difficult (but most likely) to have them |
| Post It | Post difficult thoughts/feelings up on the wall so that they can be seen and be experienced as part of the landscape |
| Physicalizing | Describe feeling like object w/ properties (bumpy, spiky, heavy, black), interacting with feelings as something separate from the self that can be observed |
| Make space | Make space for a difficult thought or feeling in the body (releasing tension, full belly breathing) or in the room (give it a chair) |
| Acceptance homework | Go out and find it |
| Discrimination training | Teach clients to identify avoidance in the moment and discriminate from acceptance posture |

| | |
|--|---|
| Journaling | Practice noticing |
| Tin Can Monster Exercise | Systematically explore dimensions of a difficult overall event |
| Distinguishing between clean and dirty emotions | Trauma = pain + unwillingness to have pain |
| Distinguishing willingness from wanting | Willing to have something is not the same as wanting |
| Joe the bum | Inviting in all experiences (even the bum you don't want to come to the party) |
| Distinguishing willingness the activity from willingness the feeling | Opening up is a behavior—different from feeling like it |
| Choosing Willingness: The Willingness Question | Given the distinction between you and the stuff you struggle with, are you willing to have that stuff, as it is and not as what it says it is, and do what works in this situation? |
| Two scales metaphor | Focus on what can be changed; let go of what cant |
| Caution against qualitatively limiting willingness | The tantruming kid metaphor – if a kid knew your limits he'd tantrum exactly that long; Jumping exercise – you can practice jumping from a book or a building, but you can step down only from the book – don't limit willingness qualitatively |
| Distinguish willing from wallowing | Moving through a swamp metaphor: the only reason to go in is because it stands between you and getting to where you intend to go |
| Challenging personal space: | Sitting eye to eye |
| Practice relating differently | Make a feeling an object in the room – explore and practice varying postures with respect to it (gently on the lap?) |
| Use unexpected language (opposite of avoidance/control) | “beautiful! Love it” in response to painful emotions |
| Practice acceptance | Stay with a difficult topic- gently redirect back when the mind tries to “save” the person; also block “collapsing” into the emotion (fusion) |

Self-as-Context

Purpose: Make contact with a sense of self that is a safe and consistent perspective from which to observe the inner and outer world

Method: Noticing the person who is noticing, connecting to the continuity of consciousness, separating the “I” from the content, categories or caricatures

Things to avoid: Relying too heavily on didactic rather than experiential teaching and knowing. Per usual, no resorting to convincing the client.

Examples of techniques

| | |
|--|--|
| Observer exercise | Notice who is noticing in various domains of experience |
| Meditations | Mountain meditation; you are the mountain not the seasons |
| Metaphors that illustrate self as distinct from thoughts/feelings etc. | Box with stuff; house with furniture; chessboard; clouds in the sky; waves and the ocean floor |
| Identifying content as content | Separating out what changes and what does not |
| Two computers exercise | Identify programming |
| Programming process | Content is always being generated – generate some in session together |
| Process vs outcome | Practice resting in the present from thoughts of the future/past |
| “I am _____” | You are not anything of those things, you are the I |
| Conceptualized self | Notice how stories (good or bad) narrow us in some contexts |
| Others as objects | Relationship vs being right |
| Connecting at “board level” | Practice being a human with humans |
| Getting back on the horse | Connecting to the fact that they will always move in and out of perspective of self-as-context, in session and out |
| Contrast observer self with conceptualized self | Pick an identity exercise |
| Forgiveness | Identify painful experiences as content; separate from context |
| Therapeutic relationship | Model unconditional acceptance of the client |
| “Confidence” | con = with; fidence = fidelity or faith – self fidelity |

Valuing

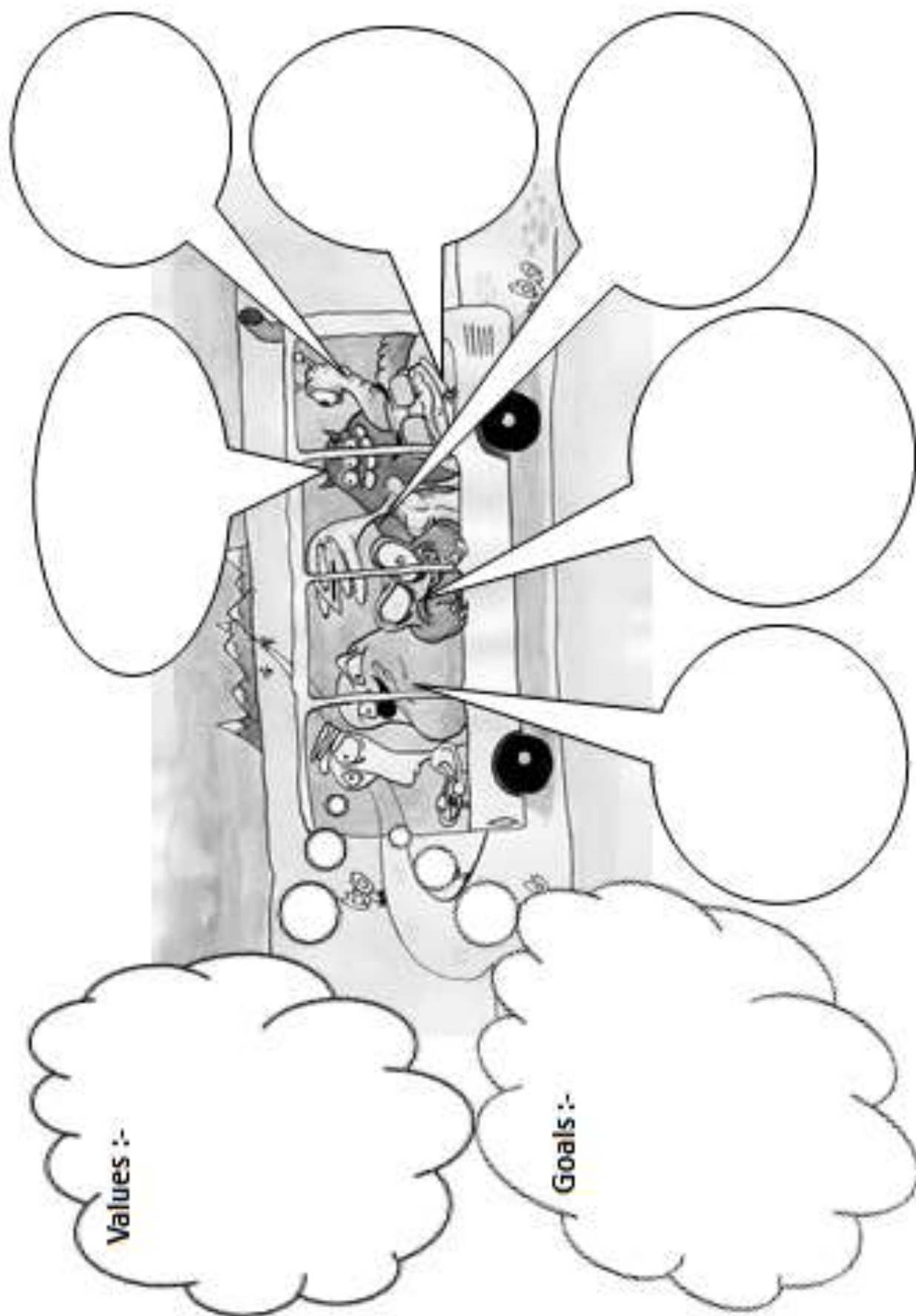
Purpose: To establish a compass to guide patterns of purposeful activity over long periods of time. To find purpose that dignifies pain.

General Method: Help clients choose and declare what gives life meaning/vitality (even when painful) and what they want to “be about.” (how they want to pattern their lives). Help clients identify what they would be willing to experience discomfort for. Distinguish values from goals and values from reasoned actions; Link activity to values.

Examples of values techniques

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Coke versus 7-Up | Define choice and have the client make a simple one. Then ask why? If there is any content based answer, repeat |
| Tombstone | Have the client write what he/she stands for on his/her tombstone |
| Eulogy | Write your eulogy. What do you want to be the story of your life? |
| Values clarification exercise | Author values in major life domains and assess consistency of behavior with those values |
| Goal clarification | List concrete goals that would instantiate these values |
| Action specification | List concrete actions that would lead toward these goals |
| Barrier clarification | List barriers to taking these actions |
| Taking a stand | Stand up and declare a value without avoidance |
| Switchback metaphor | The twists and turns are not the direction |
| GPS | The most scenic or pleasant route, or where you actually want to go? |
| Traumatic deflection | What value could you live if pain did not throw you off course? |
| Pick a game to play | Define a game as “pretending that where you are not yet is more important than where you are” -- define values as choosing the game |
| Process / outcome and values | “Outcome is the process through which process becomes the outcome” |
| Skiing down the mountain metaphor | If a helicopter flew you down it would not be skiing |
| Point on the horizon | Picking a point on the horizon is like a value; heading toward the tree is like a goal |
| Choosing not to choose | You cannot avoid choice because no choice is a choice |
| Responsibility | You are response-able |
| What if no one could know? | Imagine no one could know of your achievements: then what would you value? |
| Sticking a pen through your hand | Can I do this? Can I do this if it means that someone close to you will not get cancer in the next year? We are willing to endure pain for something meaningful |
| The little kid | Bring back the client at an earlier age to ask the adult for something |
| Lighthouses/compasses | Illustrates values as providing direction |
| The choice | You can take away your [pain], you can never feel X again, but you have to give up [value]... OR you can have your [pain] and the opportunity for [value]. Which do you choose? |
| Values expression | Finding ways to express your values in daily life |

Passengers on a Bus



What needs to be accepted

Acceptance is different from liking or wanting. It is also not resignation or “giving in,” but rather be willing to experience something in order to live more fully and consistently with values.

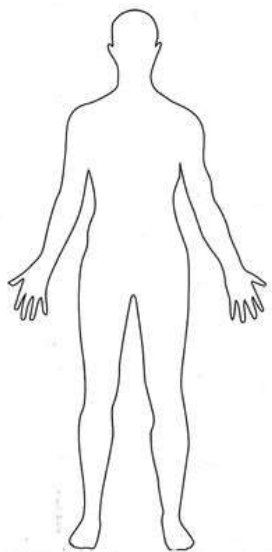
The thoughts, memories or images that I would have to accept in order to move forward:



The emotions that I would have to accept in order to move forward:



The body sensations, urges, or behavioral predispositions that I would have to accept in order to move forward:



| Day/Time | Situation | Response (e.g., thoughts, feelings, body sensations, urges, memories etc.) (clean suffering) | Extent to which you struggled with your thoughts and feelings (0 = not at all, 10 = very much). Ways in which you struggled? This might include overt behaviors (e.g., drinking) as well as covert behaviors (e.g., telling yourself you are stupid for feeling that way). (dirty suffering) | Outcome |
|----------|-----------|--|---|---------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Mountain Meditation

(Source: *Wherever You Go, There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, modified)

Posture, awareness of sitting, breathing, grounded...

Now bringing to mind a beautiful mountain you know of or can imagine. Focusing on the image or the feeling of the mountain in your mind's eye, noticing its overall shape... the lofty peak... the base rooted in solid rock... the sloping sides. Noting how massive it is, how unmoving, how beautiful whether seen from far away or up close.

Now sitting and breathing with the image of this mountain, observing it, noticing its qualities. And seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body so that your body sitting here and the mountain in your mind become one... Your head becomes the lofty peak; your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain; your buttocks and legs the solid base rooted to your cushion on the floor or to the chair. ☺ Experiencing in your body the sense of uplift, the elevated quality of the mountain deep in your own spine. Inviting yourself to become a breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are—beyond words and thought... a centered, rooted, unmoving presence.

As we all know, throughout the day as the sun travels the sky, the mountain just sits. Even the untrained eye can see changes by the hour... As the light changes, as night follows day and day night, the mountain just sits, simply being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes moment by moment and day by day. Calmness through all the change.

Change occurring season by season. Snow comes and goes. In any season, the mountain may at times be enshrouded in clouds or fog, or pelted by freezing rain. It's all the same to the mountain. In sun or clouds, broiling or frigid, it just sits, being itself. At times visited by violent storms, buffeted by snow and rain and winds of unthinkable magnitude, through it all, the mountain sits. Spring comes, the birds sing in the trees again, leaves return the trees which lost them, flowers bloom in the high meadows and on the slopes, streams overflow with waters from melting snow. Through it all, the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, by what happens on the surface, by the world of appearances.

As we sit holding this image in our minds, we can embody the same unwavering stillness and rootedness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives over seconds, hours, and years. In our lives and in our practice, we constantly experience the changing nature of the body and of the mind and of the outer world. We experience periods of light and dark, vivid color and drab dullness. We experience storms of varying intensity and violence, in the out world and in own lives and minds. Buffeted by the high winds, by cold and rain, we endure periods of darkness and pain. We savor moments of joy and uplift.

By becoming the mountain, we link up with its strength and stability and adopt them for our own. We use the mountain's energy to support our efforts to encounter each moment with mindfulness, equanimity, and clarity. It may be helpful to see that our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional storms and crises, even the things that happen *to* us are more like the weather on the mountain. We tend to take it personally but it is actually impersonal. The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied. Rather, it is to be encountered, honored... felt... known for what it is, and held in high awareness. In holding it this way we come to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom than we may have thought possible, right in the middle of the storms.

Valued Living Questionnaire

(source: Wilson, modified)

Deep down inside, what is important to you? What do you want your life to stand for? Values are our heart's deepest desires for the way we want to interact with and relate to the world, other people and ourselves. They can guide us as we move through life.

Values are not the same as goals. Values are directions that we keep moving in, whereas goals are achieved along the way. A value is life heading north. A goal is like going to Wisconsin. Goals are checked off a list. Values are not satiated, and may guide our behavior over a life time.

The following are areas of life that are valued by some people. Not everyone has the same values, and this is not a test to see whether you have the "correct" values. Think about each area in terms of general directions, not specific goals. There may be certain areas that you don't value much and you can skip them if you wish. There also might be areas of overlap, and that's okay too. It is important that you write down what you would value if nothing got in your way. What's important? What do you care about? What do you want to be about in a world where you could freely choose?

For each of the 10 domains, write a few words to summarize your valued direction (it might be helpful to begin with the stem: "I want to be a person who..."). Rate how important this value is to you on a scale from 0 (low importance) to 10 (high importance). It's okay to have several values scoring the same number. Rate how successfully you have lived this value during the past month on a scale from 0 (not at all successfully) to 10 (very successfully). This does not refer to achieving goals, but rather success in expressing values. Finally, rank these valued directions in the order of importance you place on working on them right now, with 10 as the highest rank, and 9 the next highest, and so on.

| Domain | | Importance | Success | Rank |
|---|--|------------|---------|------|
| Family relations | | | | |
| Marriage/couples/intimate relations | | | | |
| Parenting | | | | |
| Friendships/social life | | | | |
| Career/employment | | | | |
| Education/personal growth and development | | | | |
| Recreation/fun/leisure | | | | |
| Spirituality | | | | |

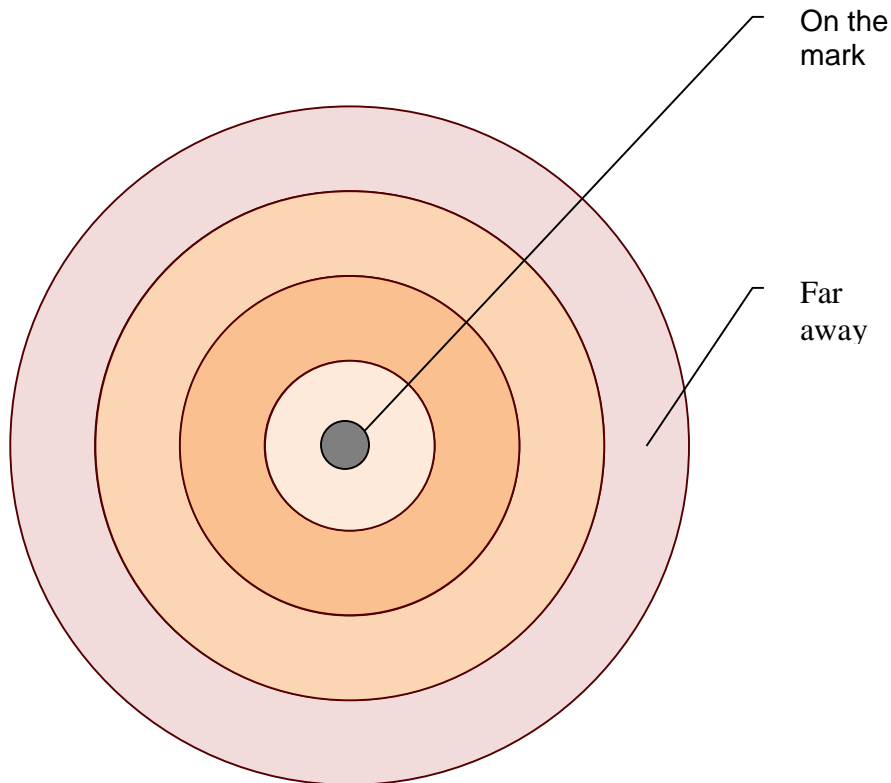
| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
| Citizenship/environment/ community | | | | |
| Health/physical well-being | | | | |

Valued Living

(Source: ACBS, modified)

The value that I really want to be living is:

How close was I to totally living this value in the last two weeks? Place an X:



Actions that moved me *towards* the bull's eye over these two weeks were:

Actions that moved me *away* from the bull's eye over these two weeks were:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form (Source: Luoma)

The basic psychological stance of the ACT therapist is an especially important factor in providing good treatment. This involves being able to make contact with the “space” from which ACT naturally flows, as well as modeling certain facets of psychological flexibility that we seek to impart to the client. Like many treatment traditions, ACT emphasizes the importance of therapist warmth and genuineness. This stance emerges quite naturally from the core understanding of human suffering from an ACT perspective. When we see our clients trapped by language, we see ourselves and the traps which generate our own pain. An “I and thou” perspective is the natural precipitant of this recognition. Collectively, the following attributes define the basic therapeutic stance of ACT.

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | The therapist realizes that he or she is in the same soup as the client and speaks to the client from an equal, vulnerable, genuine, and sharing point of view | <input type="text" value="B"/> |
| 2 | The therapist models willingness to hold contradictory or difficult ideas, feelings, memories, and the like without needing to “resolve” them. | <input type="text" value="V"/> |
| 3 | The therapist takes a compassionate and humanizing stance toward the client’s suffering and avoids criticism, judgment or taking a “one up” position | <input type="text"/> |
| 4 | The therapist always brings the issue back to what the client’s experience is showing, and does not substitute his or her opinions for that genuine experience | <input type="text"/> |
| 5 | The therapist does not argue with, lecture, coerce or even attempt to convince the client of anything. If you find yourself attempting to change a client’s mind, stop. You are not doing ACT. | <input type="text"/> |
| 6 | The therapist does not explain the “meaning” of paradoxes or metaphors to develop “insight” | <input type="text"/> |
| 7 | The therapist is willing to self disclose about personal issues when it makes a therapeutic point | <input type="text"/> |
| 8 | The therapist avoids the use of “canned” ACT interventions. Interventions are responses to the particular client we are treating. | <input type="text"/> |
| 9 | The therapist tailors interventions to fit the client’s language and immediate life experience | <input type="text"/> |
| 10 | The therapist sequences and applies specific ACT interventions in response to client needs, and is ready to change course to fit those needs at any moment | <input type="text"/> |
| 11 | New metaphors, experiential exercises and behavioral tasks are allowed to emerge from the client’s own experience and context | <input type="text"/> |
| 12 | ACT relevant processes are recognized in the moment and where appropriate are directly supported in the context of the therapeutic relationship | <input type="text"/> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form

Developing Acceptance and Willingness/Undermining Experiential Control

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 13 | Therapist communicates that client is not broken, but is using unworkable strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 | Therapist helps client examine direct experience and detect emotional control strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | Therapist helps client make direct contact with the paradoxical effect of emotional control strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Therapist actively uses concept of “workability” in clinical interactions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17 | Therapist actively encourages client to experiment with stopping the struggle for emotional control and suggests willingness as an alternative. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 | Therapist uses shifts between control and willingness as an opportunity for the client to directly experience the contrast in vitality between the two strategies. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 | Therapist helps client investigate relationship between levels of willingness and sense of suffering (willingness suffering diary; clean and dirty suffering) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 | Therapist helps client make experiential contact with the cost of being unwilling relative to valued life ends (Are you doing your values; listing out value, emotional control demand, cost, short term/long term costs and benefits) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21 | Therapist helps client experience the qualities of willingness (a choice, a behavior, not wanting, same act regardless of how big the stakes) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22 | Therapist uses exercises (jumping; cards in lap, eye contact) and metaphors (box full of stuff, Joe the bum) to help client contact willingness the action in the presence of difficult material | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23 | Therapists structures graded steps or exercises to practice willingness | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24 | Therapist models willingness in the therapeutic relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25 | Therapist detects struggle in session and teaches the clients to do so | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form

Undermining Cognitive Fusion

| | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 26 | Therapist identifies client's emotional, cognitive, behavioral or physical barriers to willingness | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27 | Therapist suggests that "attachment" to the literal meaning of these experiences makes willingness difficult to sustain | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28 | Therapist actively contrasts what the client's "mind" says will work versus what the client's experience says is working | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29 | Therapist uses language tools (get off our butts, both/and), metaphors (bubble on the head, two computers, monsters on the bus) and experiential exercises (tin can monster) to create a separation between the client and client's conceptualized experience | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30 | Therapist uses various interventions to both reveal the flow of private experience and such experience is not "toxic" | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31 | Therapist works to get client to experiment with "having" these experiences, using willingness as a stance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32 | Therapist uses various exercises, metaphors and behavioral tasks to reveal the "hidden" properties of language (milk, milk, milk; what are the numbers?) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33 | Therapist helps client elucidate the client's "story" and helps client make contact with the arbitrary nature of causal relationships within the story | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34 | Therapist helps client make contact with the evaluative and reason giving properties of the client's story (no thing matters, good cup/bad cup) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35 | Therapist detects "mindiness" (fusion) in session and teaches the client to detect it as well | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form

Getting in Contact with the Present Moment

| | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 36 | Therapist can defuse from client content and direct attention to the moment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37 | Therapist can bring his or her own feelings or thoughts in the moment into the therapeutic relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 38 | Therapist uses exercises to expand the clients sense of experience as an ongoing process | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39 | Therapists tracks content at multiple levels and emphasizes the present when it is useful | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40 | Therapist models coming back to the present moment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41 | Therapist detects client drifting into past and future orientation and comes back to now | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 42 | Therapists teaches the client to do likewise | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form

Distinguishing the Conceptualized Self from Self-as-context

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 43 | Therapist helps the client differentiate self-evaluations from the self that evaluates (thank your mind for that thought, calling a thought a thought, naming the event, pick an identity) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 44 | Therapist employs mindfulness exercises (the you the you call you; chessboard, soldiers in parade/leaves on the stream) to help client make contact with self-as-context | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45 | Therapist uses metaphors to highlight distinction between products and contents of consciousness versus consciousness (furniture in house, are you big enough to have you) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46 | The therapist employs behavioral tasks (take your mind for a walk) to help client practice distinguishing private events from self | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 47 | Therapist helps client understand the different qualities of self conceptualization, just noticing events and simple awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form

Defining Valued Directions

| | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 49 | Therapist helps client clarify valued life directions (values questionnaire, value clarification exercise, what do you want your life to stand for, funeral exercise) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 50 | Therapist helps client “go on record” as wanting to stand for valued life ends | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51 | Therapist puts his or her own therapy relevant values in the room and models their importance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 52 | Therapist teaches clients to distinguish between values and goals | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 53 | Therapist distinguishes between outcomes and processes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 54 | Therapist respects client values and if unable to support them, finds referral or other alternatives | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ? |
|------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| never true | very seldom true | seldom true | sometimes true | frequently true | almost always true | always true | <i>don't know</i> |

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Core Competency Self-Rating Form

Building Patterns of Committed Action

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 55 | Therapist helps client identify valued life goals and build an action plan | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 56 | Therapist encourages client to “have” barriers and make and keep commitments | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 57 | Therapist uses exercise and non traditional uses of language to reveal hidden sources of interference to committed actions (fish hook metaphor, forgiveness, who would be made right, how is your story every going to handle you being healthy) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 58 | Therapist encourages client to take small steps and to look at the quality of committed action | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 59 | Therapist keep clients focused on larger and larger patterns of action | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 60 | Therapist integrates slips or relapses into the experiential base for future effective action | <input type="checkbox"/> |