



CORE WELLNESS

Welcome!

The ABC's of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

By: Connie Meyerowitz, MSW, LCSW-C



CORE WELLNESS

About Core Wellness

Core Wellness is a dynamic training group offering evidence-based, practical workshops via live, webinar and home study delivery. Our passionate and knowledgeable trainers bring engaging and inspiring CE trainings that stimulate the heart and mind for client care and effective clinical skills.

Core Wellness LLC is authorized by the Board of Social Work Examiners in **MARYLAND** to sponsor social work CE programs (for LMSW, LCSW, LCSW-Cs) and maintains full responsibility for all content. The trainings qualify for Category 1 continuing education units (whether taken in person or via live interactive webinar). Our credits are also accepted by the Board of Professional Counselors of Maryland (LGPC, LCPC and MFTs) and Board of Psychologists of Maryland. Additionally, Core Wellness, LLC is recognized by the **NEW YORK** State Education Department's State Board for Social Workers #SW-0569 and the **NEW YORK** State Board for Mental Health Practitioners, #MHC-0167. For **other states**, contact your board & let us know if we can help!

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About the Presenter

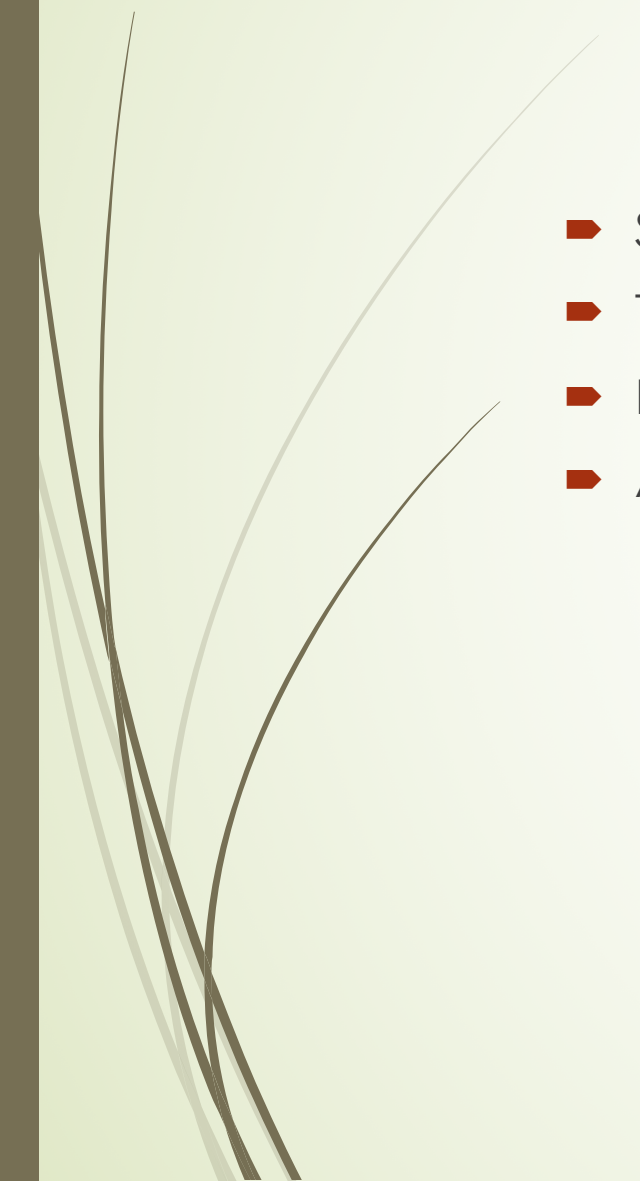
Chani (Connie) Meyerowitz, MSW, LCSW-C, is a licensed clinical social worker who integrates a strengths-based and client-centered perspective throughout her work. She counsels children, adolescents, and adults struggling with anxiety, depression and many other challenges. Connie listens to her clients and their specific needs in order to develop achievable goals.

Using DBT and ACT, Chani empowers her clients by engaging them in meaningful dialogue in order to grow in their self-awareness, understanding and acceptance. Chani has been a clinical therapist at RCC since 2015 and is invested in supporting every individual by tailoring counseling to their specific needs. She holds a certification in substance dependency counseling. Chani enjoys spending time with her family, exploring new places, as well as cozying on the couch with a hot cocoa.





Where did ACT come from?

- ▶ Started by Steven Hayes in 1982
 - ▶ The pragmatic philosophy of Functional Contextualism
 - ▶ Based on Relational Frame Theory (RFT) language + cognition
 - ▶ A child of cognitive and behavioral approaches
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Functional Contextualism



- The “glasses we put on” to view humans endeavors focuses us on ‘behavior in its context’. From this view, we assume all behavior occurs in a context and has purpose.
- Our goal is to predict and influence that behavior by considering why the behavior occurs in that specific context.
- In ACT we are interested in the function of thoughts rather than the form of them.
- The function of cognition means the way it influences our behavior
- The form of cognition means the content of the thought
- The content of the thought can be negative by the form can be positive.



Relational Frame Theory

- Proposes that human cognition and communication are founded in our capacity for identifying and creating relational links between stimuli, and made possible by our “arbitrarily applicable relational responding” ability (Cullinan & Vitale, 2009).
 - The idea that relating one concept to another is the foundation of all human language.
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What is the aim of ACT?

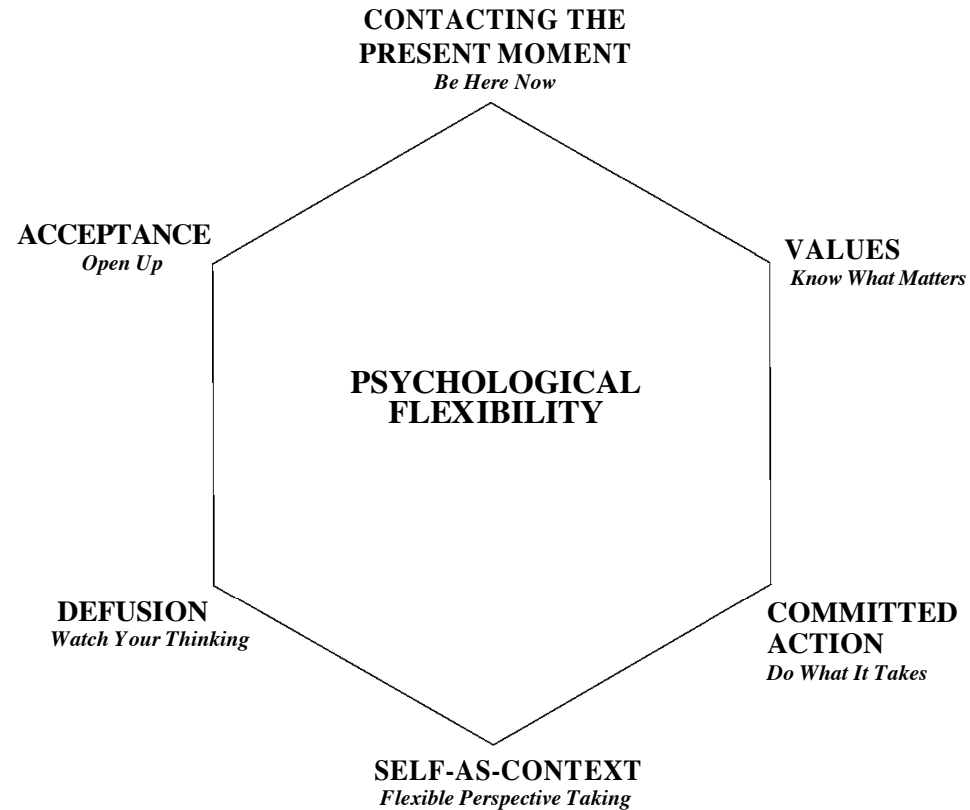
- To create a rich, full and meaningful life while accepting the pain that inevitably goes with it.
- To NOT control our difficult thoughts, memories and feelings
- By understanding the mind and the language of the mind we free ourselves up to notice rather than get sucked into difficult thoughts and emotions



6 Core Principles of ACT

- Contacting the Present Moment (Here and now)
 - Defusion (Watch your thinking)
 - Acceptance (Open Up)
 - Self as Context (Pure Awareness)
 - Values (Know what matters)
 - Committed Action (Do what it takes)
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- This is all in the context of Psychological Flexibility

ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY



Taking a history in ACT

- Identify main external barriers – i.e. situations, relationships, events -- and how these problems impact. What does this stop you from doing (or being)?
- Identify fusion (past/future/self/rules/reasons/judgments)
- Identify experiential avoidance (emotions, memories, images, thoughts, sensations)
- Identify unworkable action (what is the client doing that doesn't help or makes life worse)
- Identify values & goals (important life domains, values, valued activities, values-congruent goals)
- Identify strengths and resources and areas of life that are working well
- Identify past life history directly relevant to the current issue

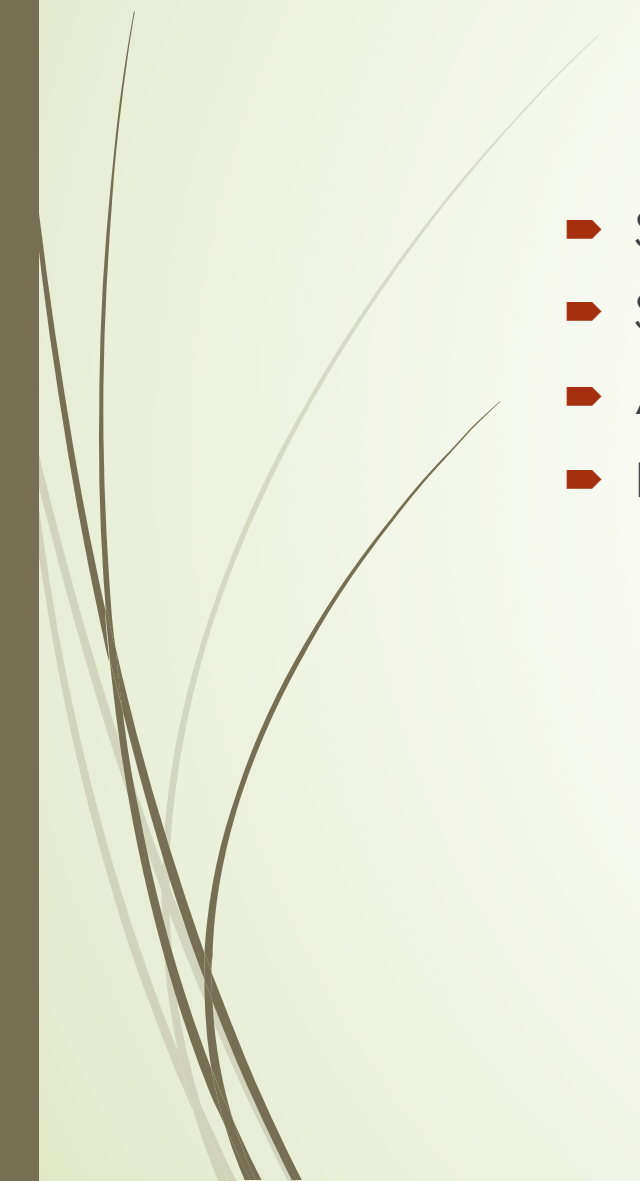
Contacting the Present Moment

- Mindfulness –paying attention with flexibility openness, and curiosity
- Be here and now
- Focus on the moment in front of you
- Flexibly bringing your awareness to the physical world around you or the psychological world within you –or both



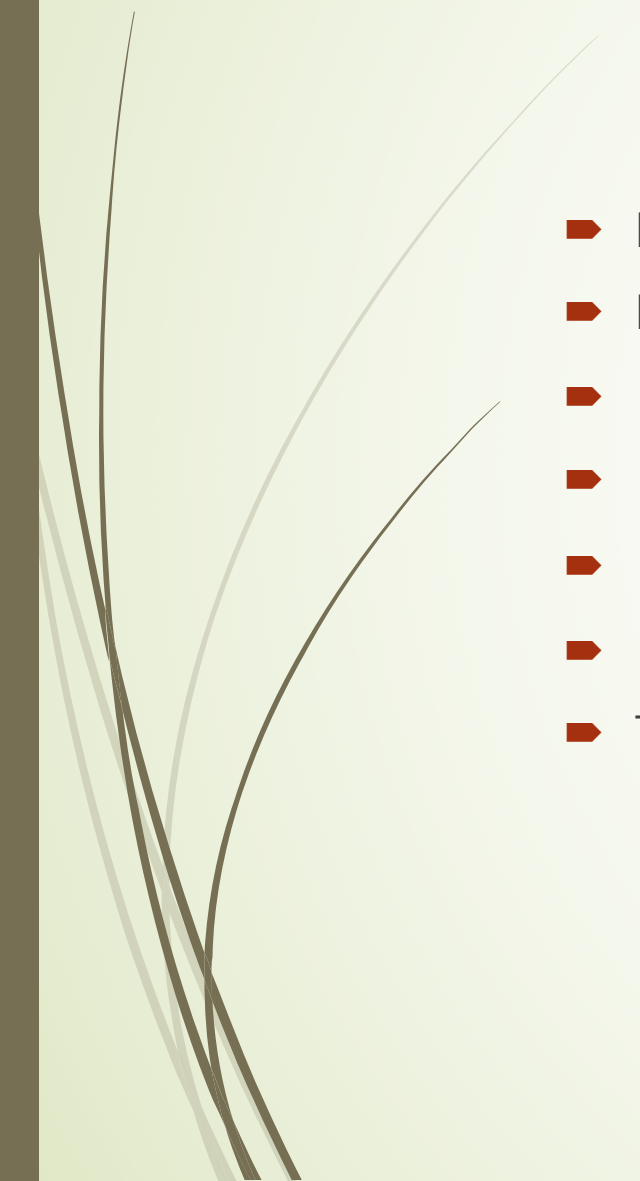


Cognitive Defusion

- Step back and separate or detach from your thoughts
 - Seeing your thoughts as nothing more than words or pictures
 - Allowing thoughts to come and go as cars passing
 - Hands/paper as thoughts exercise
- 



Categories of Fusion

- Past
 - Future
 - Self
 - Rules
 - Reasons
 - Judgments
 - These all overlap and interconnect
- 




Acceptance



- Opening up and making room for painful feelings, sensations, urges etc.
- Dropping the struggle and making space for those uncomfortable feelings to be there, and stick around
- These feelings are the guy at the party who you don't really want to be there



Acceptance Vs. Control

- IN ACT we do not advocate acceptance of all thoughts and feelings under all circumstances.
 - We only advocate for it when these two circumstances are present:
 - 1. When control of thoughts is limited or impossible
 - 2. When control of thoughts and feelings is possible, but the methods used reduce quality of life.
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Self-as-Context

- The thinking self and the observing self as 2 different parts of the mind
- Observing self-the aspect of us that is aware of those feelings, thoughts memories, sensations, etc. that our mind is generating
- NOTICING





Values



- What do you want your life to be about?
- What do you stand for?
- Values are desired qualities of ongoing action
- Clarifying values is an important step in creating a meaningful life
- You know what your trying to avoid/run away from, but where are you trying to get to?

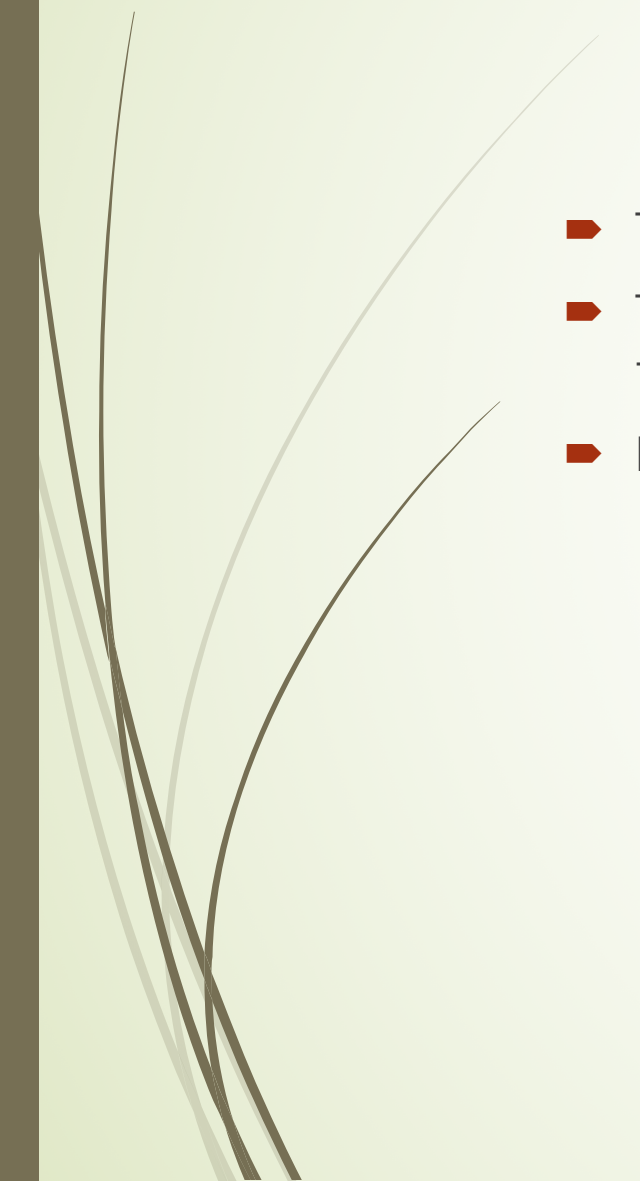


Committed Action

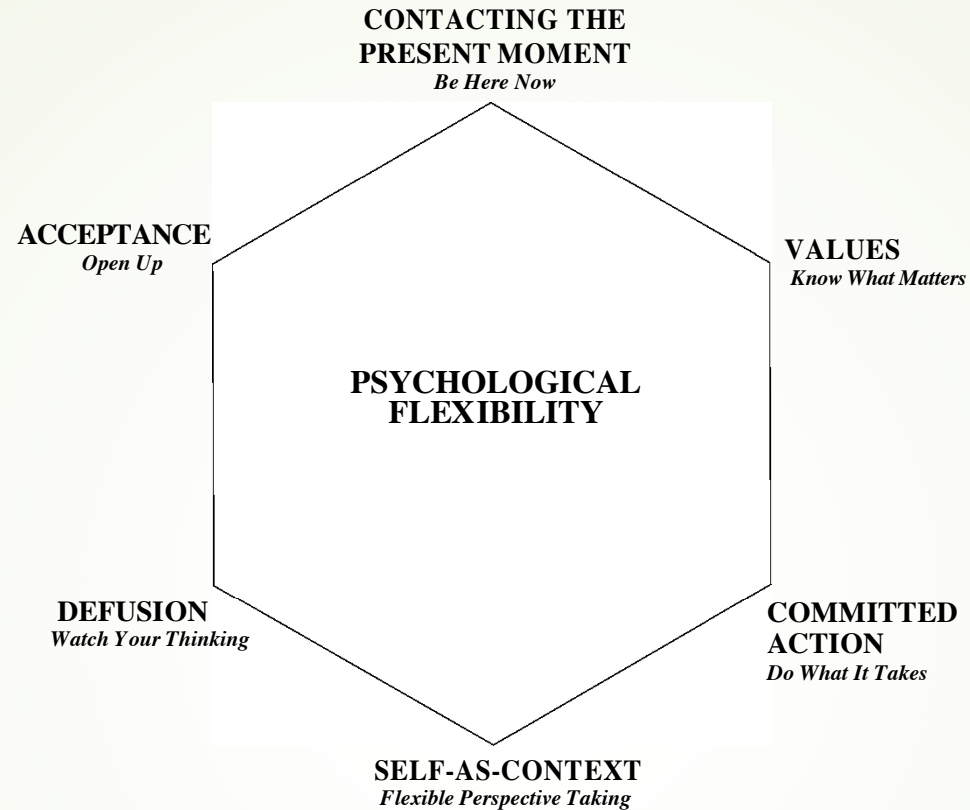
- Do what it takes
- Taking effective action guided by your values
- You only succeed if you make a move
- There may be pleasant and unpleasant feelings associated with these steps-but you are willing to do what it takes
- Goal setting, behavioral activation, exposure



Psychological Flexibility

- The six core processes function in the context of psychological flexibility
 - The ability to be in the present moment with full awareness and openness to our experience, and take action guided by our values
 - Present, open and do what matters
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FEAR vs. ACT

- **F**usion with your thoughts
- **E**valuation of experience
- **A**voidance of your experience
- **R**eason-giving for your behavior

- And the healthy alternative is to **ACT**:
- **A**ccept your reactions and be present
- **C**hoose a valued direction
- **T**ake action



Experiential Avoidance

- Trying to get rid of, suppress, or escape unwanted thoughts feelings, memories etc.
- Experiential avoidance increases suffering
- Spending a lot of time, energy, etc. trying to get rid of things you cannot get rid of and feeling unsuccessful
- Reinforcing negative beliefs- I relieve my social anxiety by not being around people, reinforcing that I cannot be around people and shrinking my social circle
- Causes addictions




Workability



- Is what your doing working to make your life rich, full and meaningful?
- If the answer is yes, than it is “workable,” there is no need to change it
- If the answer is no than it is “unworkable,” and we can think about ways to do things differently
- It doesn’t matter if a thought is true or false, but rather workable or unworkable.



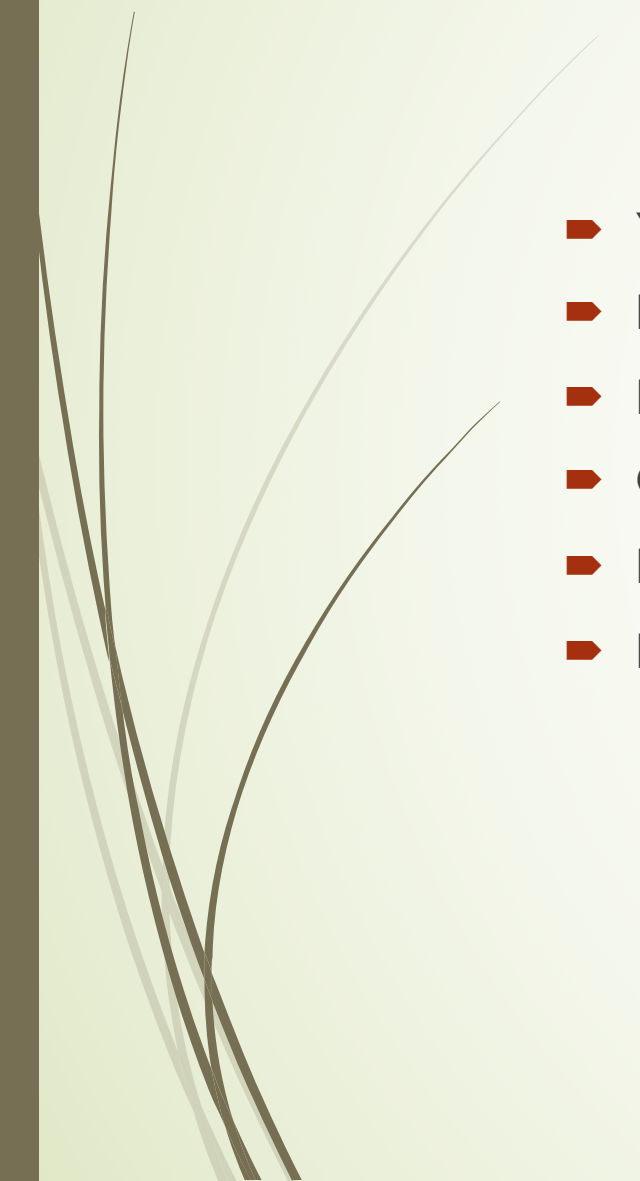
Creative Hopelessness

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- Fully opening to the reality that trying too hard to control how we feel gets in the way of living a rich, full, life.
 - How? Look at what the client has done to try to control how he feels, examine whether it has made his life better or worse and get him in touch with the unworkability of his actions .
 - This will create openness to an alternative way of handling thoughts and feelings.

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Hands-on with Clients


- Your mind as a machine
 - Hands as thoughts
 - Bring up the lights
 - Grounding/Dropping an anchor
 - Naming the story
 - From BUT to AND
- 



TED^x

University of Nevada

x = independently organized TED event



Question and Answers
What do you want to know more
about?



Thank you for coming!
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Let's Practice the Skills!

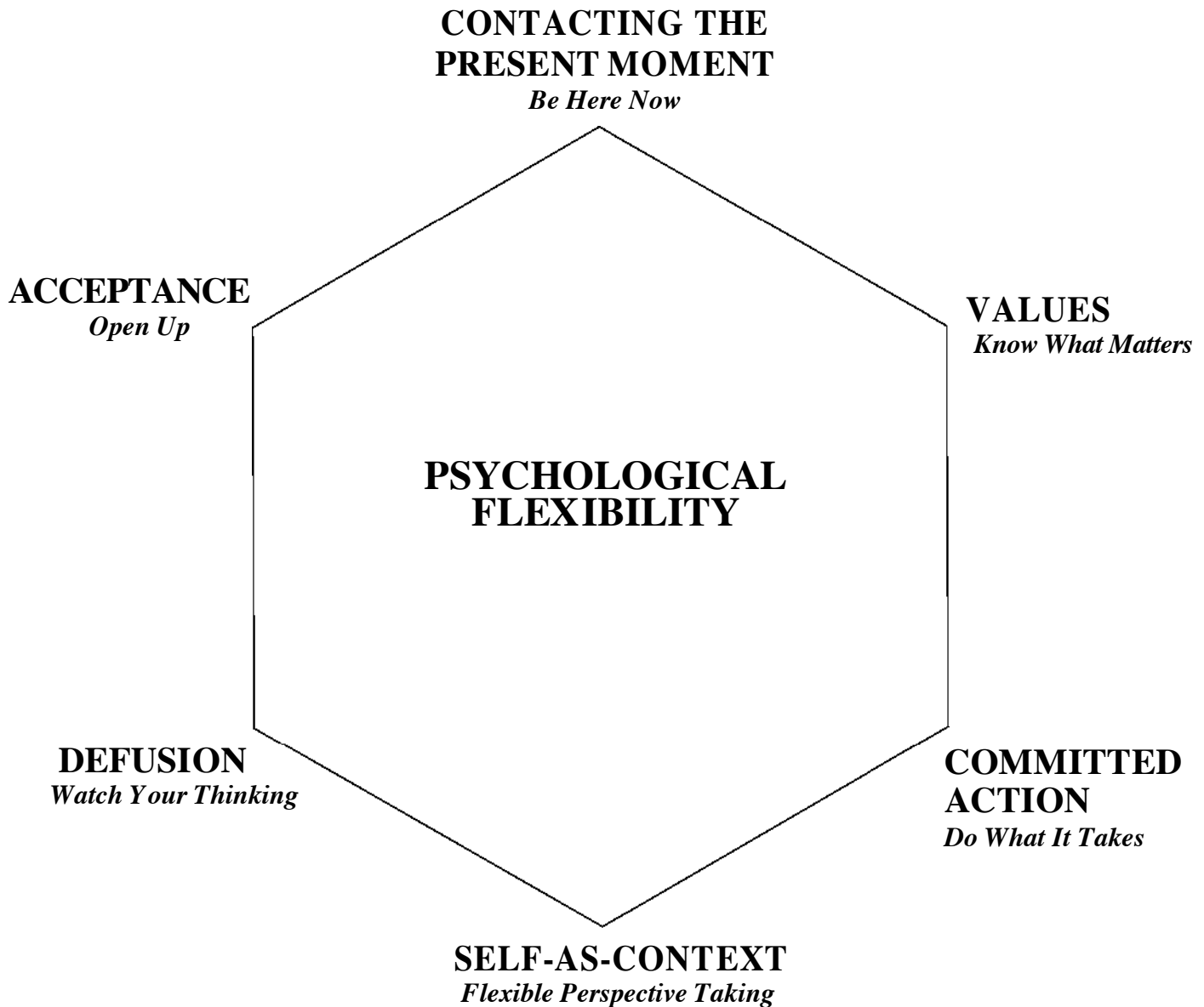
Using the 6 core principles of ACT choose a partner and practice treating each of these clients

Susie is a 25-year-old female who has recently ended a romantic relationship of 5 years. She has been experiencing insomnia and has been feeling anxious and depressed. She is not sure how to move on. She has been unable to keep up with her responsibilities and is afraid she is going to get fired for calling out of work so much.

Aaron is a 32-year-old male. He reports that he feels panicky and has what he thinks is panic attacks especially when he is on his way to work. These symptoms started a while ago but they have been getting worse. He gets nervous as soon as he wakes up in the morning because he is anticipating his ride to work. Once he is there and settled in his desk he is usually okay for much of the day.

Kimberly is a 65-year-old female who recently experienced the death of her husband of 30 years. Kimberly reports that she feels numb and out of touch. She finds herself staring into space and not knowing how she spent her time when hours have passed. She tries not to think about her husband and does not call her kids a lot because she does not want them to bring him up. She has been spending a lot of time alone.

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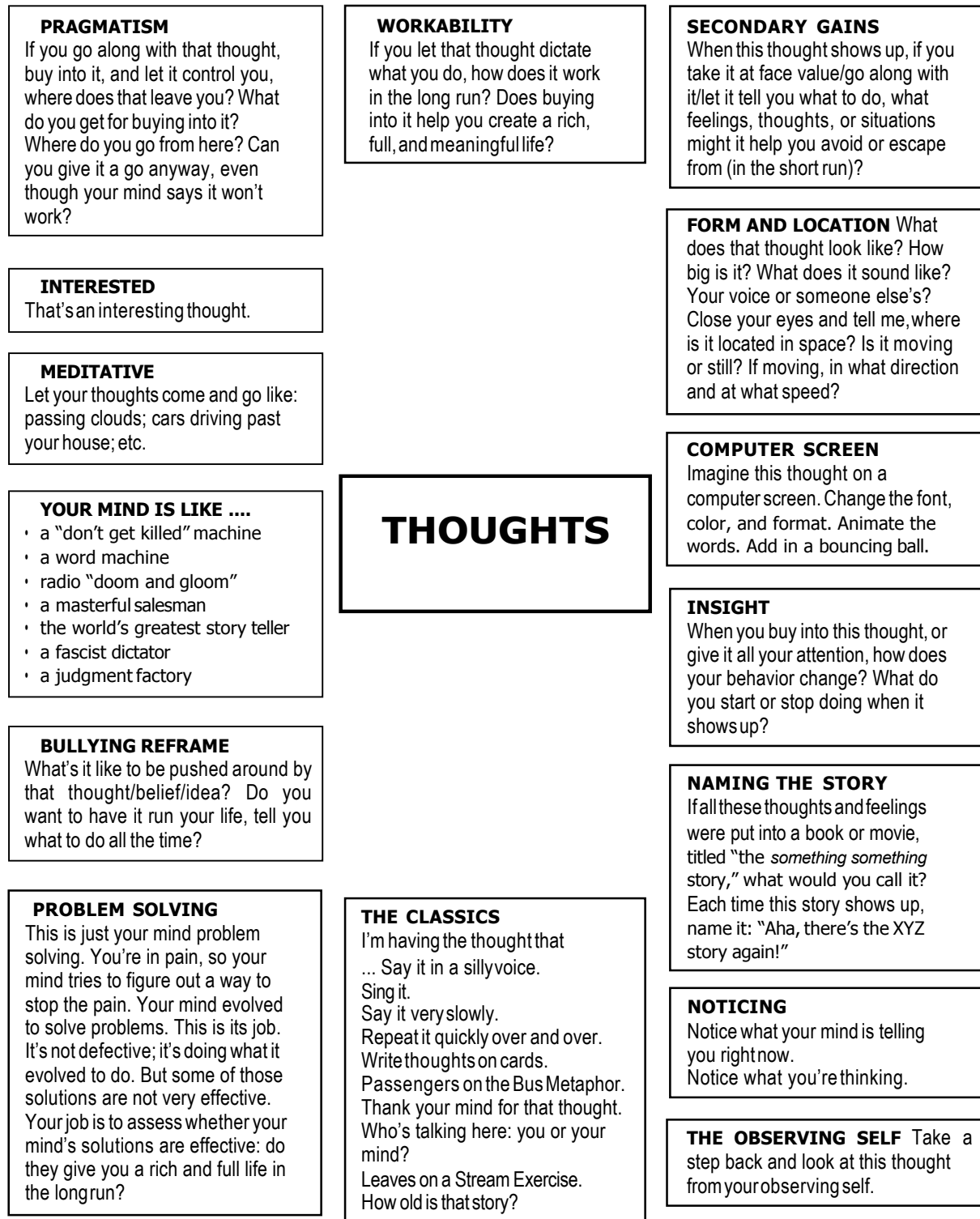


Figure 7.1 Summary of Defusion Techniques

ATTEMPTED	SOLUTIONS	AND THEIR	LONG TERM EFFECTS
What strategies have you tried to control, avoid, fight with, change or get rid of unwanted symptoms?	Short term: Were symptoms reduced?	Long term: i) Did symptoms return? ii) Did they worsen or increase?	What has this strategy cost you, in terms of: wasted time, energy or money; health, vitality, relationships? Has it brought you closer to a rich, full, meaningful life, in the long term?

A Quick Look at Your Values – page 1

Values are your heart's deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis.

There are literally hundreds of different values, but below you'll find a list of the most common ones. Probably, not all of them will be relevant to you. Keep in mind there are no such things as 'right values' or 'wrong values'. It's a bit like our taste in pizzas. If you prefer ham and pineapple but I prefer salami and olives, that doesn't mean that my taste in pizzas is *right* and yours is *wrong*. It just means we have different tastes. And similarly, we may have different values. So read through the list below and write a letter next to each value: V = Very important, Q = Quite important, and N = Not so important; and make sure to score *at least ten* of them as Very important.

1. Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life etc
2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences
3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself
5. Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment etc
6. Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc
7. Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve
8. Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering
9. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others
10. Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others
11. Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations
12. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others
13. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
14. Creativity: to be creative or innovative
15. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover
16. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others
17. Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa
18. Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling
19. Fairness: to be fair to myself or others
20. Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing
21. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
22. Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise
23. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others
24. Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others
25. Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
26. Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others
27. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others and life
28. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
29. Humour: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life
30. Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves

A Quick Look at Your Values – page 2

31. Industry: to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated
32. Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things
33. Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically – in my close personal relationships
34. Justice: to uphold justice and fairness
35. Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others
36. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others
37. Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience
38. Order: to be orderly and organized
39. Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.
40. Patience: to wait calmly for what I want
41. Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.
42. Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others
43. Power: to strongly influence or wield authority over others, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing
44. Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking
45. Respect: to be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard
46. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions
47. Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection
48. Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others
49. Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions
50. Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met
51. Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience.
52. Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals
53. Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses
54. Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality
55. Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself
56. Skilfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them
57. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others
58. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable
59. Insert your own unlisted value here:
60. Insert your own unlisted value here:

Once you've marked each value as V, Q, N (Very, Quite, or Not so important), go through all the Vs, and select out the top six that are most important to you. Mark each one with a 6, to show it's in your top six. Finally, write those six values out below, to remind yourself this is what you want to stand for as a human being.