



ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a form of third-wave behavioral therapy. It was developed by Steven Hayes (1980). ACT is derived from Relational Frame Theory (RFT), a therapy also developed by Hayes, which is based on the concept that ineffective verbal behavior leads to problematic behaviors. ACT is primarily based on principles of mindfulness, acceptance, and values. ACT was accepted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and was included in their National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices in 2010. ACT conceptualize addiction as a chronic pattern of maladaptive behaviour. ACT found to be effective as an individual therapy as well as it can be clubbed with other psychotherapies. The goal of ACT is to help an individual to accept urges to use substances and learn healthier lifestyle modifications that may reduce the desire to misuse drugs or alcohol. ACT also provides psychological flexibility. Through this therapy, an individual learns to develop adaptability in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors based on challenging situations. Basic six core skills in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes, 1980):

The present moment: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy helps you develop non-judgmental awareness, or mindfulness, regarding the client's feelings and environment.

Acceptance: The client learns how to experience things and go with the flow instead of fighting or avoiding the present moment.

Self-as-a-context: This means that the client should understand his/her own "self" in the context of his/her environment, thoughts, and feelings. Moreover, the client

is suggested to avoid the core confusing thoughts about self.

Diffusion: In this technique, the client is suggested to distract the negative thoughts, and to see negative thoughts as a temporary affair.

Values: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy teaches clients to value their own assets and support systems like family, friendship, and health.

Committed action: This includes building healthier behaviors that align an individual with values and allow them to work toward their goals.

Benefits of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Osajiet al 2000):

- ◆ ACT teaches individuals to think about the problematic situation without being anxious or guilty.
- ◆ Cognitive diffusion in ACT helps an individual to identify the negative thoughts associated with the problematic behavior. The individual tries to rethink past activities and how negative thoughts had influenced his/her behavior.
- ◆ Mindfulness in ACT helps people to be aware of their negative feeling without being judgmental towards themselves or trying to change the situation.
- ◆ The commitment aspect of ACT helps the individual to achieve their long-term goals by focusing on the values that will help them get better.
- ◆ ACT helps individuals to become psychologically more flexible, which can help the person to choose more appropriate actions.
- ◆ Increasing an individual's capacity to

tolerate and manage urges to use substances.

- ◆ Improving a person's ability to accept their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without needing to use substances.
- ◆ Building a healthier life that involves activities not related to substance use.
- ◆ Addressing symptoms of co-occurring disorders.
- ◆ Increasing the person's likelihood of remaining abstinent.
- ◆ Helping an individual focus on their long-term goals by encouraging them to identify and work on the values that can lead to recovery and healthier life.

CONCLUSION

ACT tries to control painful emotions or psychological experiences; suppression of these feelings ultimately leads to more distress. ACT adopts the view that there are valid alternatives to trying to change the way you think, and these include mindful behavior, attention to personal values, and commitment to action. By taking steps to change their behavior while, at the same time, learning to accept their psychological experiences, clients

can eventually change their attitudes and emotional states.

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