

## Middle School Guidance Officer Report

### Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT): The Psychology of Acting Mindfully



*Running away from any problem only increases the distance from the solution. The easiest way to escape from the problem is to solve it.*

At first glance, **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy** (ACT) may seem confusing. How do acceptance and commitment paired with **mindfulness** form an effective treatment? If you are aiming to be more accepting of your thoughts and feelings, how does commitment play a role? What are you committing to?

In the case of ACT, you are committing to facing the problem head-on. Instead of avoiding your problems, you commit to actions that will help you stop struggling against the inevitable and facilitate thriving instead.

As you will see later in this piece, ACT is effective for a wide range of **psychological disorders**, but it is also effective as a life-affirming and inspirational perspective on the world.

What if you could accept yourself to feel what you feel, even if it's negative? What would happen if you let yourself experience it all, instead of focusing all your effort on evading any potentially difficult problems?

ACT can show you exactly what happens, and how you can harness the power of acceptance to get the life you want.

*Acceptance is not a goal of ACT, but a method of encouraging action that will lead to positive results.*



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## Core Processes

There are six core processes of ACT that guide patients through therapy and provide a framework for developing psychological flexibility (Harris, 2011):

- **Acceptance:** is an alternative to the instinct to avoid negative, or potentially negative, experiences. It is the active choice to be aware of and allow these types of experiences without trying to avoid or change them.
- **Cognitive Defusion:** refers to the techniques that are intended to change how an individual reacts to or interacts with their thoughts and feelings rather than the nature of these thoughts and feelings. ACT is not intended to limit our exposure to negative experiences, but to face them and come out the other side with decreased fixation on these experiences.
- **Being Present:** it can be understood as the practice of being aware of the present moment while declining to attach judgments to the experience. In other words, being present involves actively experiencing what is happening without trying to predict, change, or make value judgments about the experience.
- **Self as Context:** is the simple idea that an individual is not his or her experiences, thoughts, or emotions. Instead of being one's experiences, the "self as context" process rests on the idea that there is a self-outside of the current experience. In other words, we are not what happens to us. We are the ones *experiencing* what happens to us.
- **Values:** in this context are defined as the qualities that we choose to work towards in any given moment. We all hold values, consciously or unconsciously, that direct our steps. In ACT, we apply processes and techniques that help us live our lives according to the values that we hold dear.
- **Committed Action:** These core processes show that ACT is not all that different from other behavioral-based therapies, but the emphasis on acceptance and allowing instead of avoiding is what separates ACT from many other forms of therapy.

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