

## Middle School Guidance Officer Report

### The Role of ACT in Psychology and Mindfulness

- ACT is built on the **Relational Frame Theory**, a theory that is well supported by psychological research.
- This theory is based on the idea that the human ability of "relating" is the foundation of language and cognition. This idea of relating is similar to associating, but goes further in that relating involves noting the dimensions along which relation exists. For example, we may associate an apple with an orange, but our ability of relating allows us to understand that they have a similar shape (round) and function (to be eaten) but have different colors and textures.
- Humans, unlike most other animals, have an uncanny ability to relate even neutral events no matter what the order is, as well as seemingly unrelated words and ideas. While this is an advantageous ability, it can also facilitate negative thoughts and judgments about ourselves.
- If we can relate the word "cookie" to the experience of eating a cookie, then we can also relate the word "worthless" to how we feel about ourselves.
- Our quite useful ability to form relational networks (e.g., I relate the words "orange", "apple", and "pear" to the concept of "fruit") can be a destructive ability when it comes to anxiety or depression (e.g., I relate "worthless" to my ability to perform my job and, by extension, I can relate the word "worthless" to my life).
- In this way, ACT is built on Relational Frame Theory. We often form **relational networks** that are not complimentary or life-giving, but we can also change those relations that we find problematic. We can apply mindfulness to accept our feelings and change how we react and relate to them instead of trying to avoid them.
- For a more detailed explanation of Relational Frame Theory, you can check out this website from [www.actmindfully.com.au](http://www.actmindfully.com.au).



**Anna Willis**  
**Middle School Guidance Officer**