

**“My last therapist told me to
‘just accept it.’” Building
Acceptance Using Acceptance
and Commitment Therapy**

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INTRODUCTION

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Financial Disclosures

ACT-Informed Exposure *for* Anxiety

CREATING EFFECTIVE, INNOVATIVE
& VALUES-BASED EXPOSURES USING
ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY

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Foreword by Steven C. Hayes, PhD

Objectives

- Clarify and understand concept of **acceptance** through the acceptance and commitment therapy model
- Learn metaphors for connecting with acceptance
- Discuss common misunderstandings of acceptance

Acceptance



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

- Acceptance-based cognitive behavioral treatment
- Focus on how we relate to uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations over trying to change these experiences
- Growing research base with OCD (Twohig et al., 2010; Twohig et al., 2018; Thompson, Twohig, & Luoma, 2021)

Psychological Flexibility

- Definition: the ability to remain present while in contact with discomfort in order to engage in deliberate action towards meaningful life directions.





Acceptance or willingness in ACT

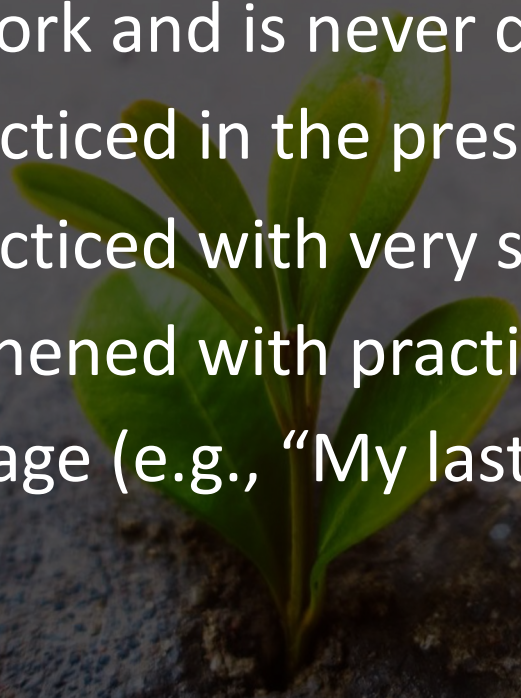
- Choosing to be present with uncomfortable feelings and bodily sensations without trying to change them
- Moment to moment experience
- Allows us to take action towards what is important to us

Acceptance is not...

- ...passive—it is an active choice
- ...resignation (giving up)
- ...future-oriented—we cannot accept what has not happened (and is not happening)
- ...a trick to make anxiety go away

Key Points About Acceptance or Willingness...

- ...is really hard
- ...takes a lot of work and is never done
- ...can only be practiced in the present moment
- ...can only be practiced with very specific internal experiences
- ...may be strengthened with practice
- ...may have baggage (e.g., “My last therapist told me to, ‘just accept it’”)





Like learning to
ride a bicycle



Aunt Edna

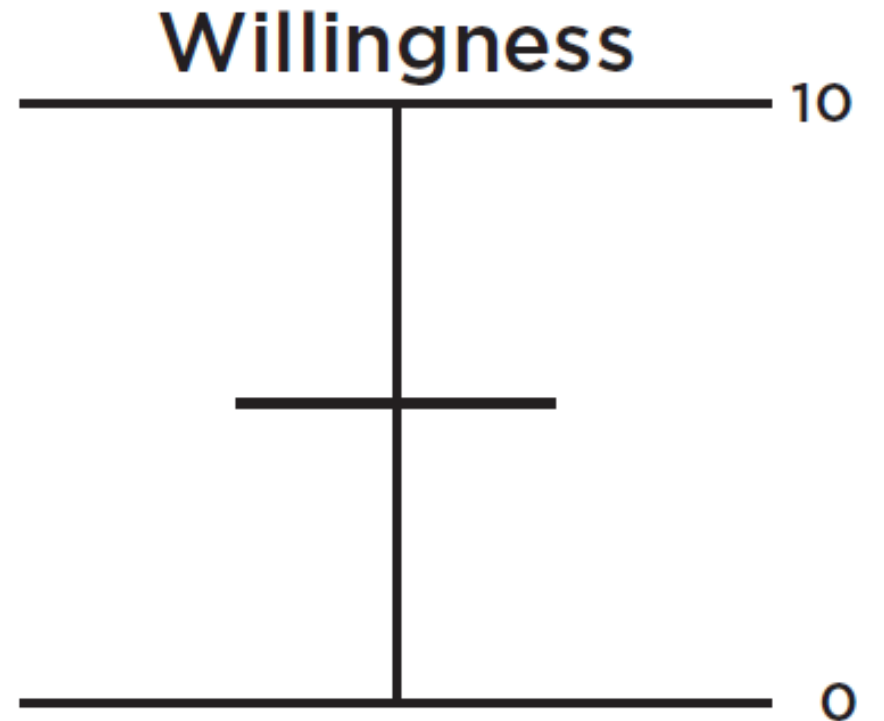
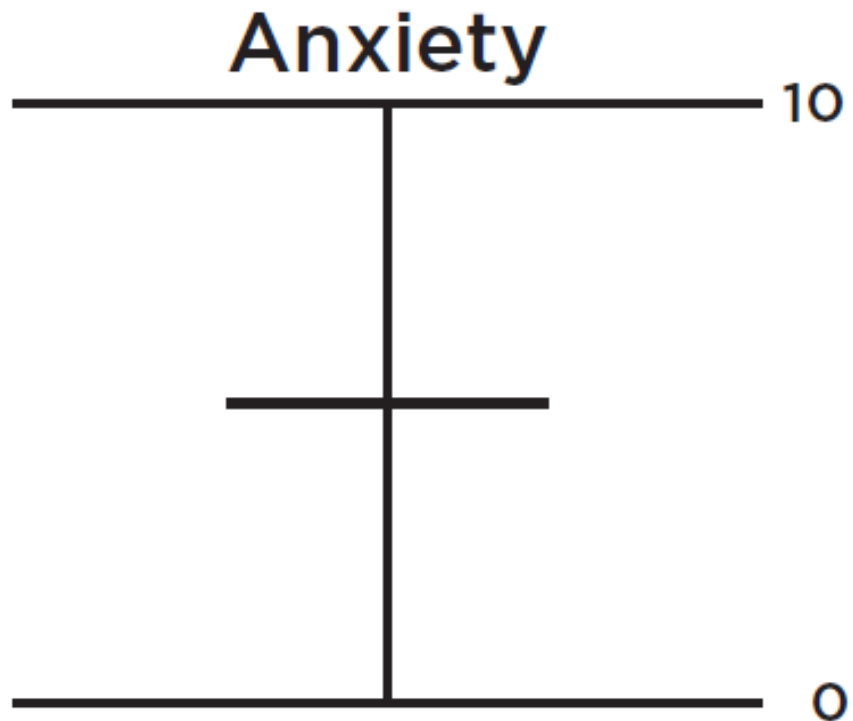




Tug-of-War with the Anxiety Monster



Willingness Switch



Willingness with Interoceptive Exposure

Hyperventilation

- 1 breath every 2s for 60s
- 45s trial, then four 60s trials with 15s rest in between


Rate your experiences after each trial:

Disc= Discomfort Scale (i.e., 0 - 10)

Willing = Willingness to experience discomfort without struggle (i.e., 0 - 10)

Trial	Disc	Willing
<u>1</u>	___	___
<u>2</u>	___	___
<u>3</u>	___	___
<u>4</u>	___	___
<u>5</u>	___	___

Adapted from Farrell et al...Deacon, 2016; Deacon et al., 2013

A child's bedroom at night. A bed with a white sheet and a grey blanket is visible. A nightstand holds a lamp, a red alarm clock, and a yellow toy truck. A red boot with a grey sole is on the floor. A framed picture hangs on the wall.

Other Acceptance Metaphors/Exercises

- Monster under the bed
- Holding a feather vs holding a cactus
- Physicalizing exercise

A person is swinging on a rope over a body of water, likely a lake or river, during the "blue hour" of dusk. The person is in mid-air, having just released the rope. The background shows a calm body of water reflecting the dim light, with silhouettes of trees and a building in the distance. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Seeing Willingness in Other Places

- We all have prior experience with willingness
- What types of discomfort are easier for you?
- Excluding anxiety, is there a time when you did something that you was hard but that you were proud to have accomplished?

The background of the image is a light-colored surface covered with numerous small, square wooden blocks. Each block has a black question mark printed on its top surface. The blocks are scattered across the entire frame, creating a pattern of question marks. A thin, dark horizontal line runs across the middle of the image, just above the word 'Questions'.

Questions

Resources

Trainings

www.portlandpsychotherapytraining.com/

Thompson, B.L., Pilecki, B.C., & Chan, Joanne, C. (2023). *ACT-informed exposure for anxiety disorders: Creating, effective, innovative, values-based exposures using acceptance and commitment therapy*. Oakland, CA: Context Press.

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