

**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy:  
Why is ACT So Effective in Addiction Treatment?**

**ENTERHEALTH**  
ADDICTION TREATMENT

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**ENTERHEALTH – WHO WE ARE** **ENTERHEALTH**  
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Enterhealth is the premier regional provider of addiction and recovery services, delivering the full continuum of individualized care and integrating all the key treatment components recommended by the National Institutes of Health and required for long-term sobriety.

- Enterhealth Ranch – residential inpatient treatment
- Enterhealth Outpatient Center of Excellence – outpatient treatment
- And now offering telehealth services for expanded access and convenience

Our clinicians are all master’s- or PhD-credentialed experts. This is the depth of clinical expertise required to facilitate real change.

Enterhealth is accredited by the Joint Commission. For more information go to [www.enterhealth.com](http://www.enterhealth.com).

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**ENTERHEALTH – WHY WE ARE HERE** **ENTERHEALTH**  
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- We are here today not only to talk about acceptance and commitment therapy, but to educate our community about addiction and the most enlightened path to recovery.
- We want the field to evolve and grow for all who are touched by addiction and for all who treat addiction.
- Therefore, Enterhealth will continue to be the thought leaders and relentless innovators in the substance abuse treatment space.

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### WHAT IS ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT)?

- A treatment modality that focuses on utilizing six core processes to help the client move toward a life worth living.
- It is based on a philosophy of science called functional contextualism, meaning what works in a certain situation. More so, the primary focus is on the world and the things humans struggle with.
- Ideally, we want to learn as providers why our clients do what they do and why they suffer, and utilize intervention to target these areas and inspire application of behavioral change.

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### WHY IS ACT HELPFUL IN ADDICTION TREATMENT?

- Clients are utilizing approaches that are unhelpful to avoid pain and suffering.
- In ACT, we are using mindfulness techniques to build self-awareness and expand upon the fusion to our thoughts and feelings.
- Clients often become “stuck” in the story they have told themselves about their lives and experiences.
- With awareness building and defusion, we are able to assist the client to move out of their story while taking a holistic approach to help build a life worth living.

We are learning to live a life with unpleasant events rather than rid ourselves of them.

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### ACT MODEL OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

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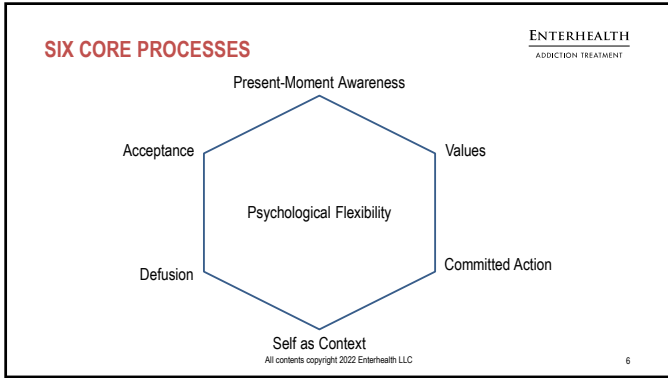
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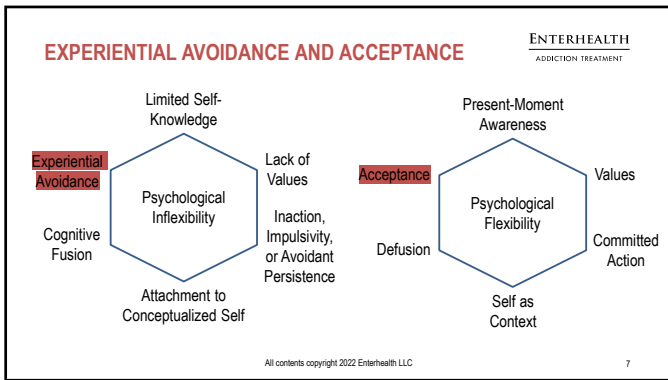
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**EXPERIENTIAL AVOIDANCE**

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- We are actively sorting our feelings, thoughts and sensations into categories: positive and negative
- Verbal events are related to actual events  
Ex. If I tell you to think of a dog, you will see a picture of a dog in your mind
- In application to avoiding negative thoughts  
Ex. If I tell you not to think of something that is unpleasant to you, you will think of that very experience
- In application to avoiding negative emotions  
Ex. "If I have a drink, I won't feel anxious"
- Can be driven by social/cultural community  
Ex. The social focus on "feeling good"

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### ACCEPTANCE

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- Aware of and embracing the moment without attempting to alter it
- Using experiential awareness and intervention exposure
- Willingness
  - Being open to whatever is coming up in the moment and having the ability to sit with it
  - Therapist acts as a guide in the moment experience

"The only way out is through." – Robert Frost

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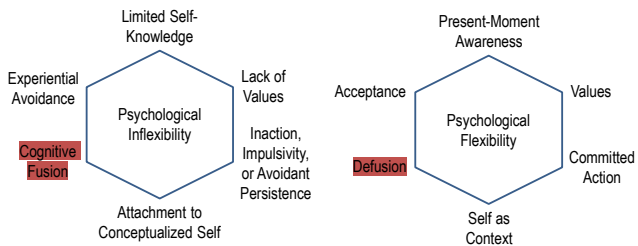
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### COGNITIVE FUSION AND DEFUSION

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### COGNITIVE FUSION

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- Caught in the content of our thoughts that dominates our actions
- It's about how we relate to what we think, not the thought itself
- Social/cultural influence  
Ex. "Men aren't supposed to have emotions"



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**DEFUSION**

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- Altering the thought doesn't change the thought
- We can watch the mind instead of being dictated by it
- We are actively lessening the meaning and relationship to the thought itself and therefore will increase flexibility
- Take the power out of it

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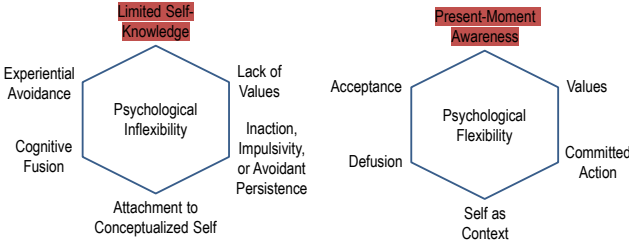
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**LIMITED SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND PRESENT-MOMENT AWARENESS**

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**LIMITED SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

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- Dominance of the conceptualized past and future
- We are being dragged out of present-moment awareness by avoidance and fusion
- Our behavior is then influenced by past behavior due to lack of ability to remain present



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**PRESENT-MOMENT AWARENESS**

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- Mindful awareness of the present moment
- We are able to be more flexible and responsive
- Past behavior will not repeat itself

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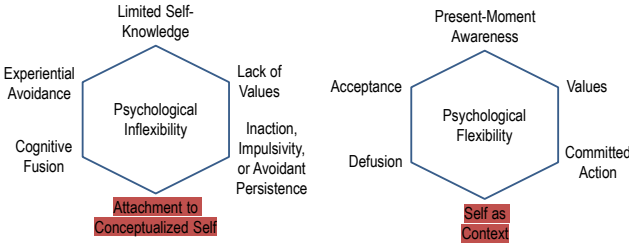
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**ATTACHMENT TO CONCEPTUALIZED SELF AND SELF AS CONTEXT**

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**ATTACHMENT TO CONCEPTUALIZED SELF**

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- Individuals develop a story of their lives over time
- There is some truth to the story, but it's not always helpful
- Fusing with the story that is repetitively told  
Ex. "I am an alcoholic and have been this way forever. There is no hope for me."



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**SELF AS CONTEXT**

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- A secure self separate from events and experiences
- More observant and less attached to the experience itself as defining who we are

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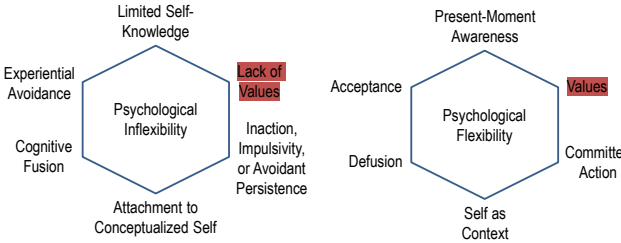
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**LACK OF VALUES AND VALUES**

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**LACK OF VALUES**

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- Values are chosen qualities of life
- We set life goals through our values
- If the client's behavior is tied up in avoidance, they cannot live a life congruent to their values
- Past life experiences will dictate behaviors going forward rather than creating a life worth living for the client



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### VALUES



- Taking an active look at what gives life meaning
- Values are never achieved – they guide our behavior and help us establish goals
- Values-driven intervention allows the therapist to not get “caught” in an argument with the client about right or wrong, rational or irrational – it allows focus on what the client finds to be important to guide action
- Truth is defined by what is useful to empower individuals to live meaningful lives

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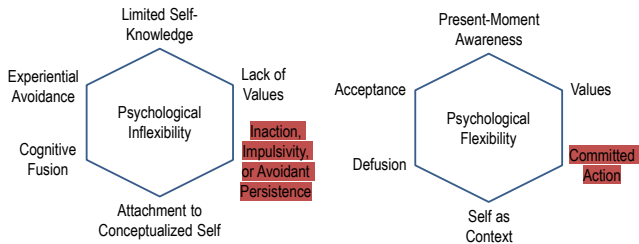
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### INACTION, IMPULSIVITY OR AVOIDANT PERSISTENCE AND COMMITTED ACTION



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### INACTION, IMPULSIVITY OR AVOIDANT PERSISTENCE

- Short term goals achieved, not long term  
Ex. Feeling good, being right, defending the “story”
- No contact with true wants or values, only focused on immediacy and temporary relief
- Moment-to-moment relief from psychological pain
- Lacking in all or several areas of life  
Ex. Leisure, family, career, personal growth, self care



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### COMMITTED ACTION

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- Actions or behavioral changes that are congruent to values
- Addressing the barriers to change by utilizing other core processes
- All processes are interrelated to create behavioral change

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### GETTING STUCK IN THE PROCESS

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- ACT focuses on understanding the functions of the behavior and triggers identification to help make behavioral change. This process is beneficial to utilize in addiction treatment. Also, the process focuses on giving empowerment to the client in doing what is effective.
  - Clients have deficits in the following areas:
    - Goal setting
    - Planning
    - Time management
    - Self soothing
    - Assertiveness/communication skills
    - Conflict resolution
- (Harris, 2013)

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### HELPFUL STARTING POINTS

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- Lacking motivation go to values clarification
  - Avoidance (PTSD, borderline PD) go to gentle compassion to defusion/acceptance
  - Crisis and panic go to grounding and centering exercises
  - Grief/loss go to self compassion
  - Anxiety/depression symptoms related to thoughts go to present moment for full life engagement
- (Harris, 2013)

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### THE PAYOFF

- In addiction treatment, we focus on understanding the function of our client's behaviors, barriers to change and implementation of healthy behavior
- Behavior- what is the client doing?
- Antecedents-what are situation, thoughts and feelings
- Payoffs- what are the outcomes that reinforce it

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### BULLSEYE

- Exercise to implement with clients
- Helping clients identify core values and look at their behaviors being in congruence with values
- Helpful tangible exercise to help clients see where they are at and look at how to be more effective
- Clients help lessen the disconnect between behavior and values in order to achieve an improved sense of well being and living a life worth living

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### CLOSING THOUGHTS



"Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
 your thoughts become your words,  
 your words become your actions,  
 your actions become your habits,  
 your habits become your values  
 your values become your destiny."  
 - Mahatma Gandhi

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**RESOURCES**

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ADDICTION TREATMENT

- Gordon, MSW, T. & Borushok, J. (2017). *The ACT Approach*. Eau Claire, WI: PESI Publishing & Media.
- Lumoa, PhD, J. B., Hayes, PhD, S., & Walser, PhD, R. (2007). *Learning ACT*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Stoddard, PhD, J. A. & Afari, PhD, N. (2014). *The Big Book of ACT Metaphors*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Harris, Russ (2013). *Getting Unstuck in ACT*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

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**Questions & Answers**

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**HOW TO GET YOUR CEU CERTIFICATE**

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- For those who participated for CEU credit, you must have attended for 30 minutes to be considered.
- Tomorrow, you will receive a follow-up email with a link to complete a survey.
- Once you complete the survey, we will email your CEU certificate directly to you.
- Please give us at least 24 hours after submitting your survey to generate your certificate.
- You will also receive a link to our website to review today's presentation and find information about upcoming Enterhealth webinars.

We appreciate everyone taking the time to join us today! Have a great day!

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