

ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY

**CONTACTING THE
PRESENT MOMENT**

Be Here Now

ACCEPTANCE

Open Up

VALUES

Know What Matters

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
FLEXIBILITY**

DEFUSION

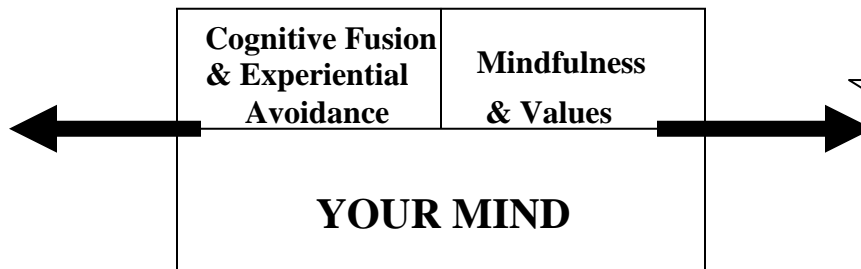
Watch Your Thinking

**COMMITTED
ACTION**

Do What It Takes

THE OBSERVING SELF

Pure Awareness



Informed Consent

- The name reflects a key message: accept what is out of your control, and commit to action that improves your life
- It's a very active form of therapy/coaching; it's not just talking about problems
- 'Learning skills to handle thoughts and feelings more effectively, so they have less impact and influence over you'
- 'Clarifying what's important to you in the big picture, what you want to stand for in life, what strengths and qualities you want to develop, and then using those values to help you take action to make your life better'
- Requires practice between sessions – like learning to play guitar
- At times, may be a roller-coaster ride. Pre-empt urge to drop out, if relevant.
- Agree on number of sessions

Taking a history

- Identify main external barriers – i.e. situations, relationships, events -- and how these problems impact. What does this stop you from doing (or being)?
- Identify fusion (past/future/self/rules/reasons/judgments)
- Identify experiential avoidance (emotions, memories, images, thoughts, sensations)
- Identify unworkable action (what is the client doing that doesn't help or makes things worse)
- Identify values & goals (important life domains, values, valued activities, values-congruent goals)
- Identify strengths and resources and areas of life that are working well

Mindfulness

- 'Paying attention with openness, curiosity and flexibility'
- At the 'core' of mindfulness is contact with the present moment
- The basic instruction is 'notice X' - where X is anything that is present, here and now
- The first step in defusion is 'notice your thoughts'
- The first step in acceptance is 'notice your feelings'
- The way to access the observing self is to 'notice who is noticing'

The Observing Self

- 'Strengthens' or 'enhances' defusion/acceptance/contact with the present moment
- Becomes a 'short cut' for the above: e.g. 'look at this from your observing self'
- Facilitates defusion from the conceptualised self
- Increases willingness for exposure to feared private experiences(e.g. traumatic memories)
- For trauma survivors: a part of you came through unharmed
- Transcendence is an important part of any spiritual journey

Three types of interventions for the observing self:

- metaphors (chessboard/ documentary of Africa/ stage show/ sky and weather/ thinking self and observing self)
- defusion exercises (the good self & bad self card trick/ leaves on a stream)
- contacting the observing self ('continuous you'/ notice who's noticing)

DISSECTING THE PROBLEM

This form is to help gather information about the nature of the main challenge, issue, or problem facing you. First, please summarize, in one or two sentences, what the main issue or problem is:

Second, please describe, in one or two sentences, how it affects your life, and what it stops you from doing or being:

Regardless of what your problem is—whether it is a physical illness, a difficult relationship, a work situation, a financial crisis, a performance issue, the loss of a loved one, a severe injury, or a clinical disorder such as depression—when we dissect the problem, we usually find four major elements that contribute significantly to the issue. These are represented in the boxes below. Please write as much as you can in each box about the thoughts, feelings, and actions that contribute to or worsen the challenge, problem, or issue facing you:

<p>Entanglement with Thoughts What memories, worries, fears, self-criticisms, or other unhelpful thoughts do you dwell on or get “caught up” in that are related to this issue? What thoughts do you allow to hold you back or push you around or bring you down?</p>	<p>Life-draining Actions: What are you currently doing that makes your life worse in the long run: keeps you stuck; wastes your time or money; drains your energy; restricts your life; impacts negatively on your health, work, or relationships; maintains or worsens the problems you are dealing with?</p>
<p>Struggle with Feelings What emotions, feelings, urges, impulses, or sensations (associated with this issue) do you fight with, avoid, suppress, try to get rid of, or otherwise struggle with?</p>	<p>Avoiding Challenging Situations: What situations, activities, people, or places are you avoiding or staying away from? What have you quit, withdrawn from, dropped out of? What do you keep “putting off” until later?</p>

YOUR VALUES: *What really matters to you, deep in your heart? What do you want to do with your time on this planet? What sort of person do you want to be? What personal strengths or qualities do you want to develop?*

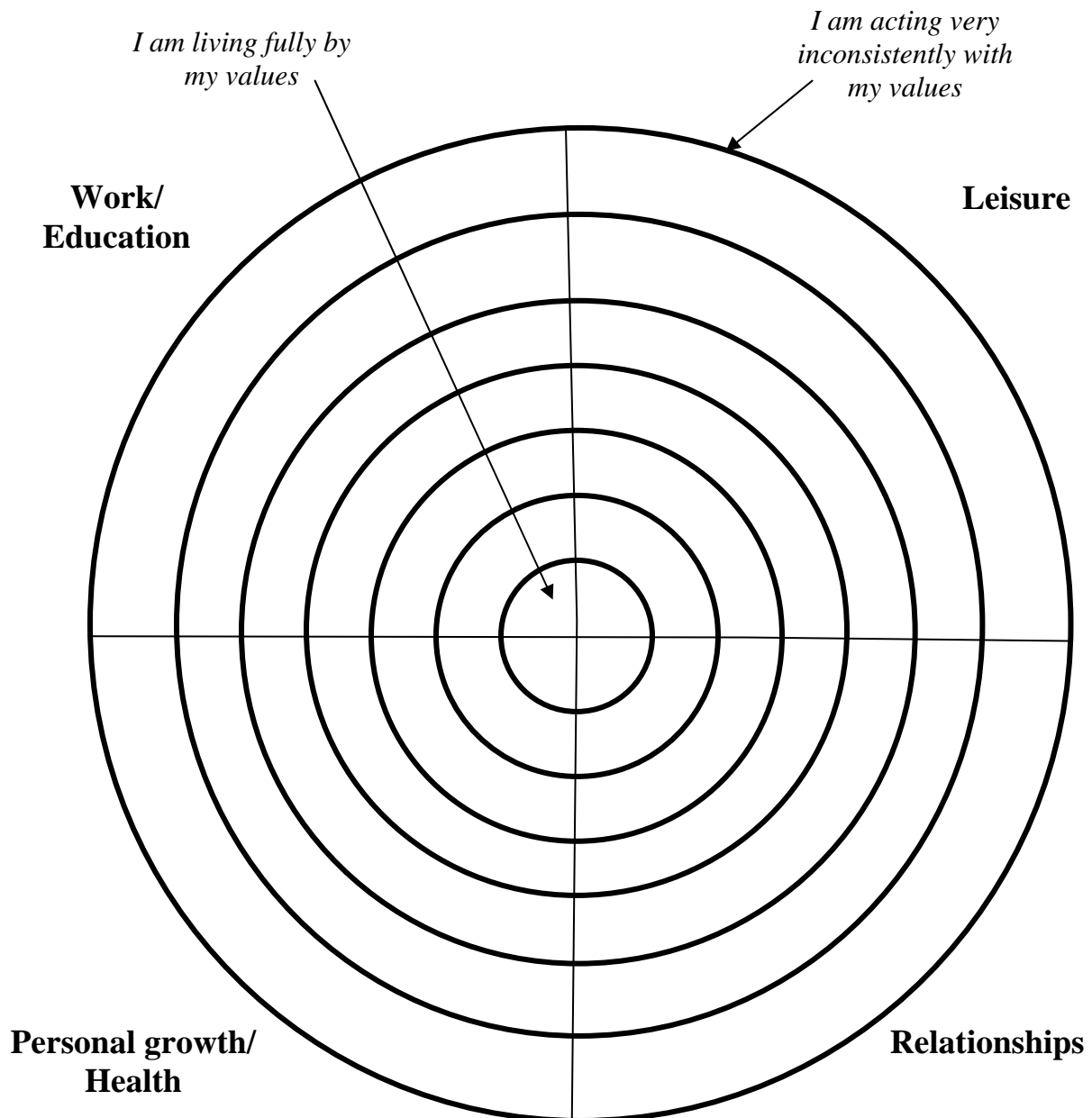
1. Work/Education: includes workplace, career, education, skills development, etc.

2. Relationships: includes your partner, children, parents, relatives, friends, co-workers, and other social contacts.

3. Personal Growth/Health: may include religion, spirituality, creativity, life skills, meditation, yoga, nature; exercise, nutrition, and/or addressing health risk factors like smoking, alcohol, drugs or overeating etc

4. Leisure: how you play, relax, stimulate, or enjoy yourself; activities for rest, recreation, fun and creativity.

THE BULL'S EYE: make an X in each area of the dart board, to represent where you stand today.



THE 'THIRD WAY' OF RESPONDING TO THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

What thoughts and feelings are problematic for you, in your life today?

We grow up learning two main ways of responding to thoughts and feelings: 'Automatic' or 'Control'. Unfortunately, if these are the only two ways we know, this will hold us back in life.

1. 'AUTOMATIC' MODE

What do you do when you are in 'AUTOMATIC' mode – when you let your thoughts and feelings control you, as if you are a robot following a program? In other words, what do you do when you let your thoughts and feelings push you around, pull you down, overwhelm you, hold you back, keep you stuck, or otherwise dictate how you behave?

When you respond to thoughts and feelings in 'AUTOMATIC' mode, does it take you closer to the life you want, or further away?

2. CONTROL MODE

What sort of things do you do when you are in 'CONTROL' mode -- actively trying to avoid, fight or get rid of unwanted thoughts and feelings? (For example: distracting yourself; drugs; alcohol; medication; junk food; cigarettes; TV; books; internet; sleeping; procrastination; avoiding people, places, tasks or challenges; being hard on yourself; putting up with it and hoping it will go away; seeking advice; gambling; getting angry; blaming yourself or others; computer games; exercise; prayer; meditation; yoga; positive thinking; dieting or bingeing; self-harming or risky behaviour, constructive problem-solving; procrastination; giving up or quitting; making 'to do' lists, fantasising about the future, etc.)

If any of these things improve your life in the long term, keep doing them!

But consider this: do these methods get rid of your unwanted thoughts and feelings, so they never come back again?

How many of these methods give you some relief in the short term, but keep you stuck or make your life worse in the long term?

When you have over-relied on these methods, what have they cost you in terms of health, money, wasted time, relationships, missed opportunities, or increased emotional pain?

Do you wish to go through life with only those two ways of responding to difficult thoughts and feelings – 'automatic' or 'control' -- or are you open to a 'third way' that is radically different?

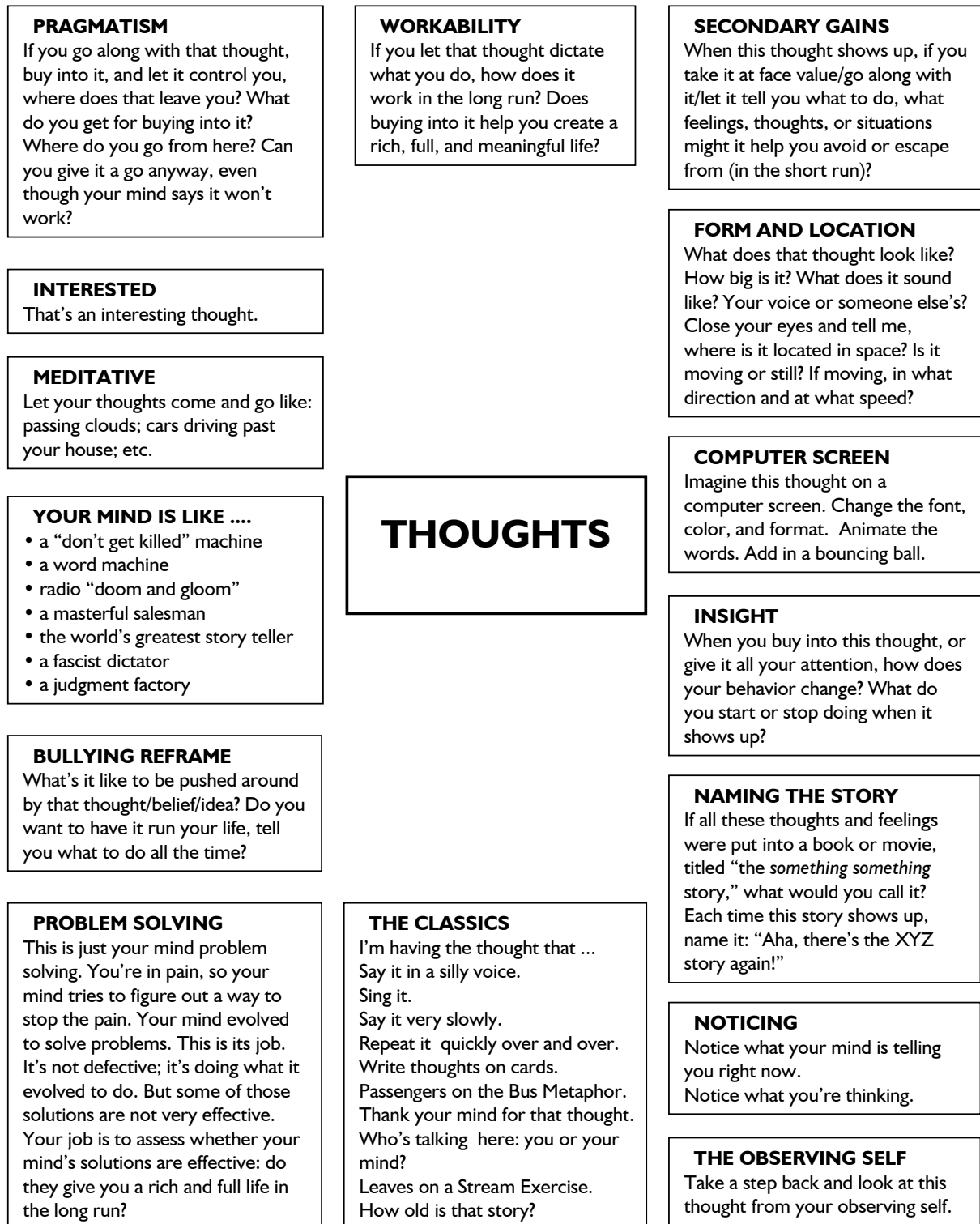


Figure 7.1 Summary of Defusion Techniques

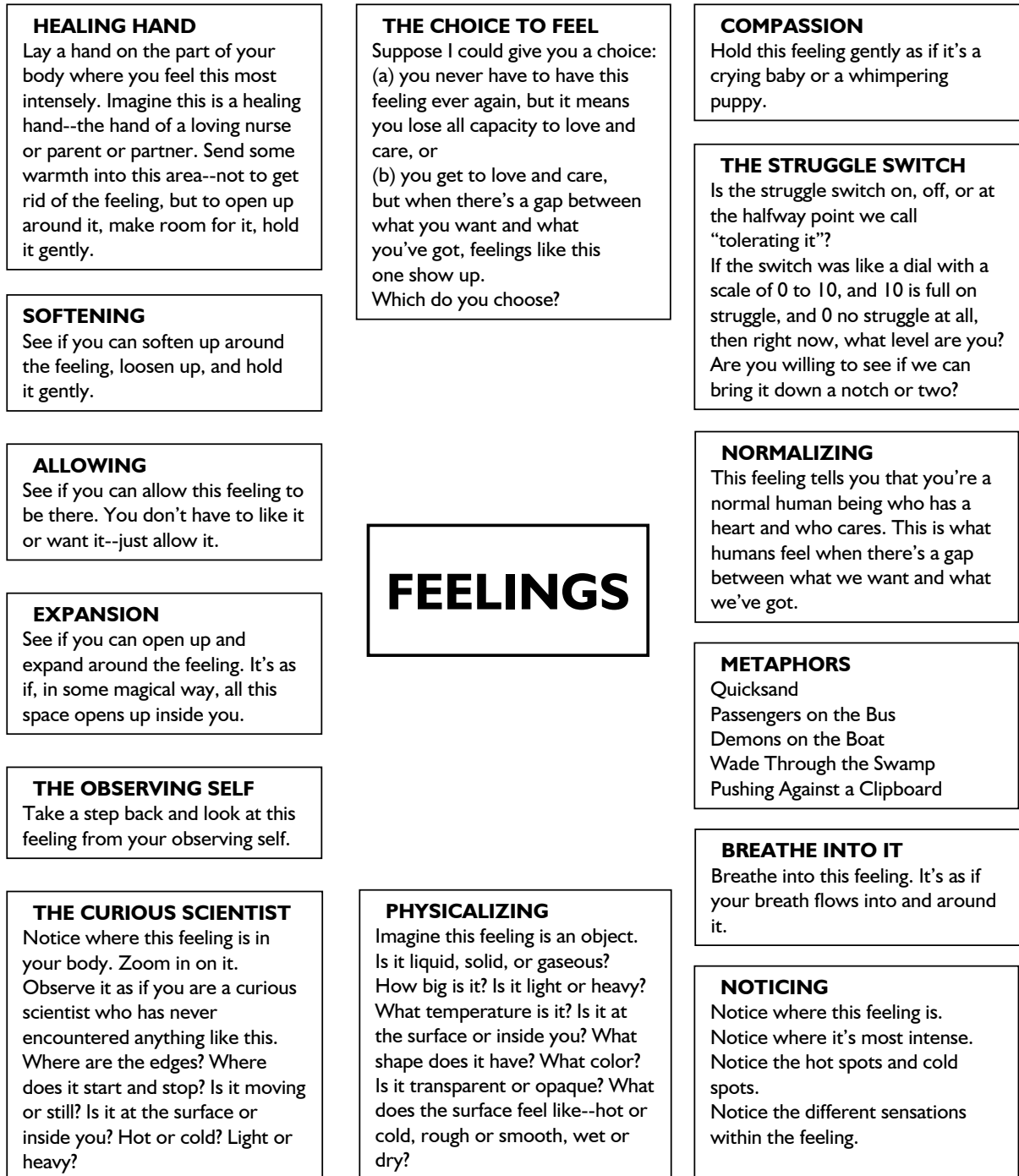


Figure 8.1 Common Acceptance Techniques

Values

Values are ‘desired qualities of ongoing action’.

Colloquially: values are your heart’s deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being.

Values are like a compass: guide you, give direction, help you stay on track.

Goals versus values: marriage versus being loving

Values-focused life versus goals-focused life

Values are NOT: goals, desires, needs, ethics, morals, feelings, rules, beliefs, codes of conduct

1. Values are here and now; goals are in the future.
2. Values never need to be justified.
3. Values often need to be prioritized.
4. Values are best held lightly.
5. Values are freely chosen.

In ACT, values come first: then goals.

Once values are clarified: short term, medium term and long term goals are set:

SMART goals, and Live Person’s goals!

Some Values Clarification Exercises

The Magic Wand

7-day Documentary

Values worksheets e.g. Bull’s Eye, Valued Living Questionnaire

Childhood dreams

Role models

1 Week to Live

What gives you a sense of meaning/ purpose/ fulfillment?

80th birthday/ Wedding anniversary/ Retirement party

Funeral/Eulogy/Tombstone

Explore pain: what does this tell you about what really matters to you?

Commitment Exercise

PART 1 Pick a value of high importance that you have been neglecting or have lost touch with.

My value is to be ...

What I've been doing that's inconsistent with my value is

What that has cost me is ...

(Think of relationships, health, wasted time, wasted money, emotional distress, etc)

PART 2 My commitment is to take the following action(s). (Be specific: specify when will you do it - day, date, time - and what will you actually do)

In order to do what I value, I am willing to make room for (accept and defuse) the following thoughts, images, feelings, urges, memories & sensations:

I am willing to make room for thoughts & images such as:

I am willing to make room for emotions/feelings such as:

I am willing to make room for sensations in my body such as:

I am willing to make room for urges to:

I am willing to make room for memories such as:

RESOURCES

ACT Workshops throughout Australia, all year round: www.actmindfully.com.au

Including 2-day introductory workshops, 2-day advanced workshops, 2-day skills-building workshops, and 2-day relationships issue workshops: all APS-endorsed for 12 hours. Now also featuring 1-day ACT for Adolescents workshops, run by Louise Hayes

The Happiness Trap – by Russ Harris

An ACT-based self-help book, aimed at everyone and anyone; now published in over 15 languages and 20 countries. There are free resources to go with the book at

www.thehappinesstrap.com

The Confidence Gap – by Russ Harris

Russ's latest self-help book: an ACT look at confidence, success, and peak performance. It is especially suitable for life coaching and executive coaching, and for those folks who are *not* struggling with major clinical disorders. (That's why, in this book, ACT stands for Acceptance & Commitment *Training* rather than *Therapy*.)

ACT With Love – by Russ Harris

A self-help book, based on the use of ACT for common relationship issues. There are free resources to go with the book at **www.act-with-love.com**

ACT Made Simple – by Russ Harris

A brand new textbook on ACT, published by New Harbinger. (It is packed full of practical information, presented in an entertaining, accessible, easy-to-read style. I wanted to call it 'ACT For Dummies'.) There are free resources at **www.actmadesimple.com**

Annual Australia & New Zealand ACT Conference: www.anzact.com

The Official ACT Website: www.contextualpsychology.org

This website is packed full of resources! Membership is via values-based dues – i.e. you pay whatever you think it's worth. (The minimum joining fee is \$1.00) Membership entitles you to a vast array of free resources, plus access to a world-wide email 'chat group' for ACT therapists to support and learn from each other

THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY LTD

ACN 000 543 788

DIRECTORATE OF TRAINING AND STANDARDS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORM

To assist the Society and presenters of Professional Development Activities to provide activities of value to members, each participant is asked to complete an evaluation of the activity attended. Thank you for your cooperation.

ACTIVITY TITLE:	Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
PRESENTER (S):	Dr Russell Harris
DATE (S) OF ACTIVITY:	
VENUE:	

Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The publicised description of the activity was accurate	0	1	2	3	4	5
The venue (building/room/facilities) was suitable	0	1	2	3	4	5
The material was of sufficient complexity and scope for me to learn	0	1	2	3	4	5
The material was relevant to my professional development needs	0	1	2	3	4	5
I acquired new knowledge or skills	0	1	2	3	4	5
The presentation format was suitable for the content	0	1	2	3	4	5
The teaching level was appropriate	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sufficient opportunity was provided for active participation	0	1	2	3	4	5
Audiovisual aids and handouts were legible, relevant and helpful	0	1	2	3	4	5
The learning objectives were met as stated	0	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter(s) was/were well prepared	0	1	2	3	4	5
Concepts were clearly explained	0	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter(s) was/were good teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, the activity should be presented again	0	1	2	3	4	5
The enrolment process was smooth and efficient	0	1	2	3	4	5
The National Office staff was responsive and helpful	0	1	2	3	4	5

Other Comments:

THIS IS THE BACK OF THE EVALUATION FORM
PLEASE DO NOT WRITE ON HERE