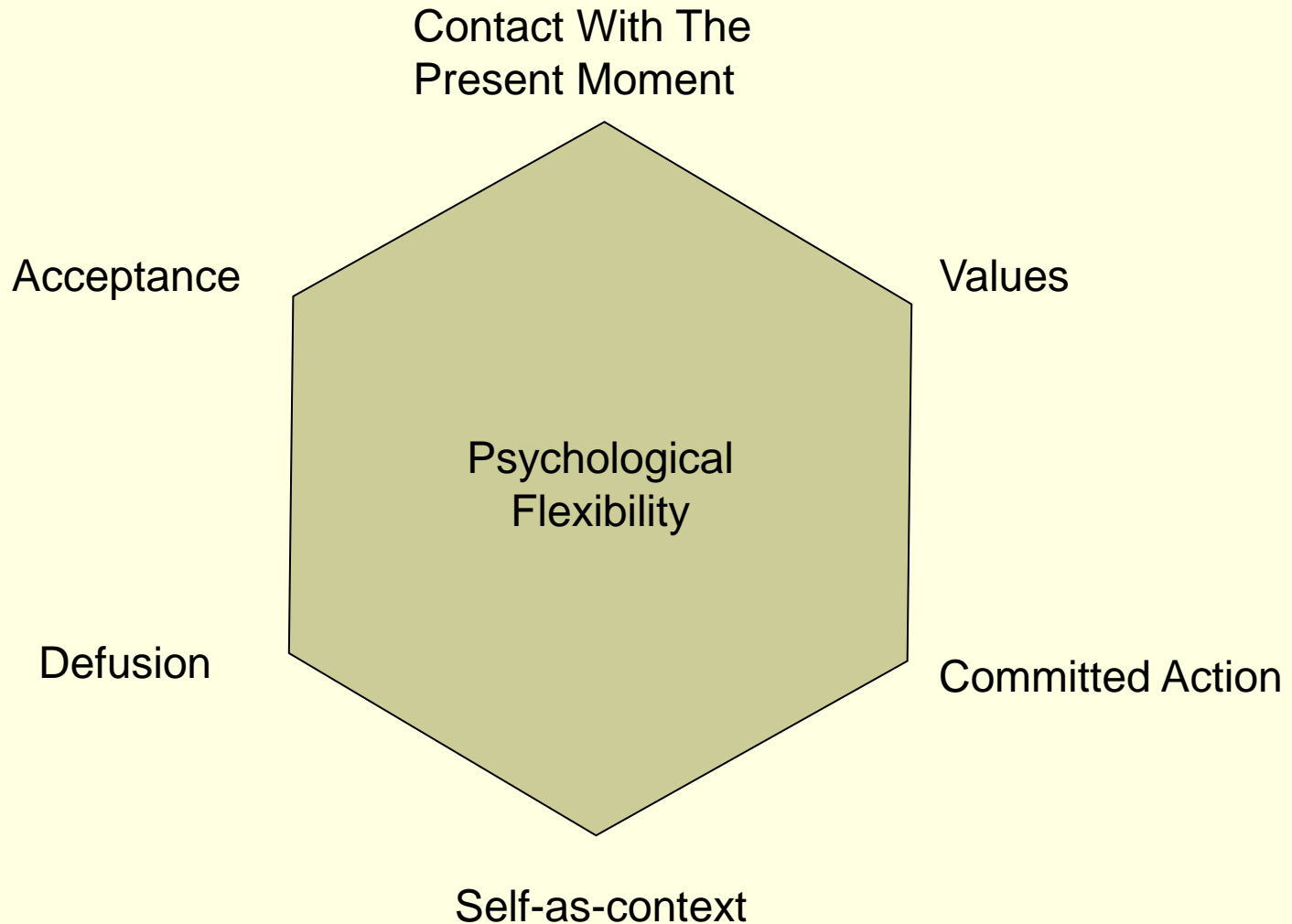


# Acceptance & Commitment Therapy

## INTRODUCTORY Workshop with Russ Harris



# Workshop Aims

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- Theoretical overview
- Experiential overview
- Practical Tools
- Personal Growth
- Have Fun
- Inspiration

# About ACT

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- The origin
- The name
- The data
- The paradox
- The aim

**Be Present**

Contact with the Present Moment

Acceptance

Values

Psychological Flexibility

**Open Up**

Defusion

**Do What Matters**

Committed Action

Self-as-context

**Be Present**

**Psychological  
Flexibility**

**Open Up**

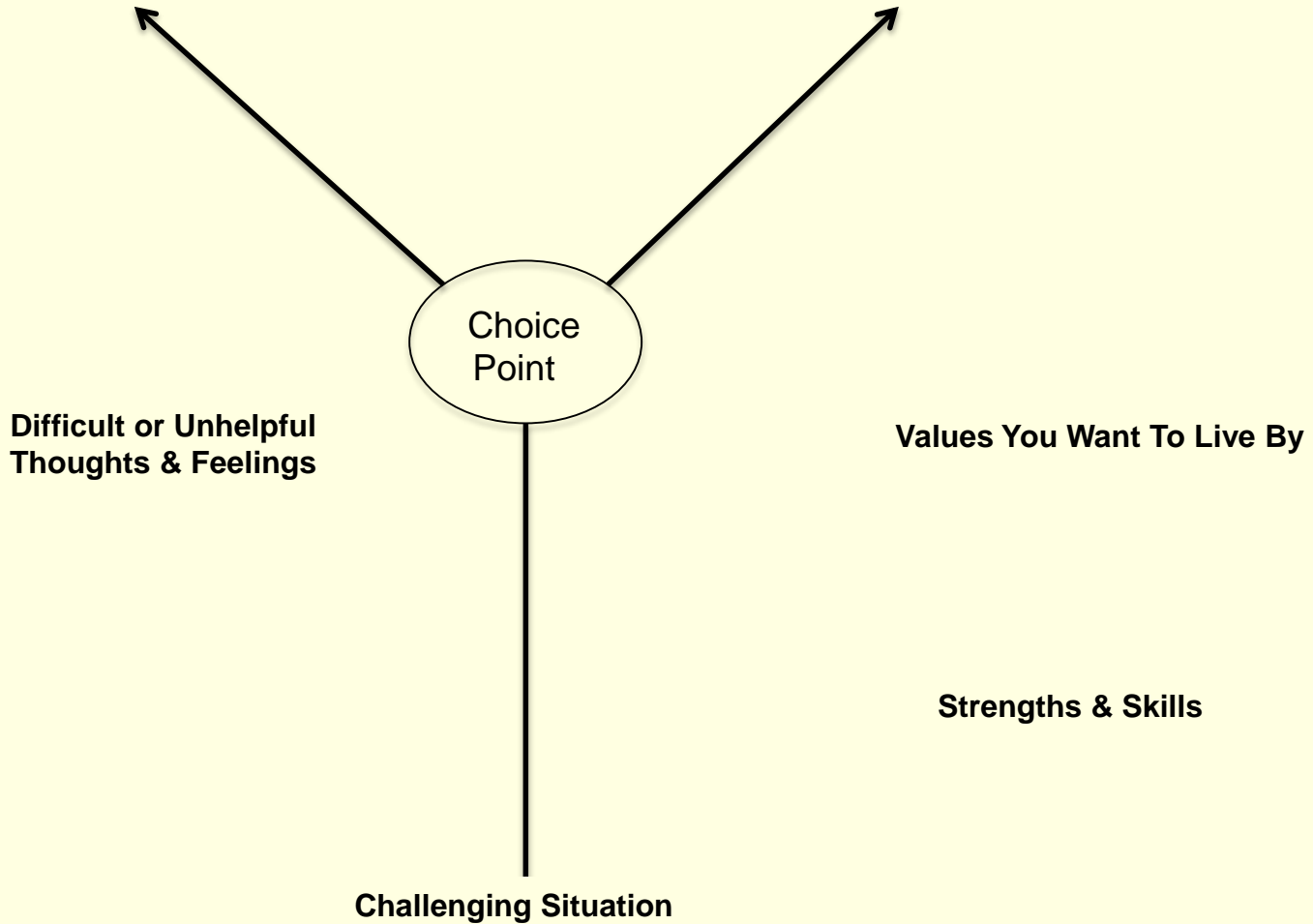
**Do What  
Matters**

**'AWAY'**

Moving away from the life outcomes you want, acting *ineffectively*, behaving *unlike* the person you want to be

**'TOWARDS'**

Moving towards the life outcomes you want, acting effectively, behaving like the person you want to be



# At the choice point, STOP

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- S – Slow down (slow your breathing down; slowly press your feet down; slowly stretch )
- T - Take note (notice your thoughts & feelings, & where you are & what you are doing)
- O - Open up (make room for your thoughts & feelings & allow them to freely flow through you)
- P - Pursue values (take action, guided by values)

## INFORMED CONSENT

- ACT is a very active form of therapy or coaching – not just talking about problems.
- Learning skills to handle difficult thoughts and feelings more effectively, so they have less impact and influence over you
- Clarifying your ‘values’: what matters to you, what you want to stand for in life, how you want to treat yourself and others, what gives you a sense of meaning or purpose
- Taking action: to solve problems, and do things that make life better
- Like playing a guitar – needs practice both *in* session and *between* sessions.



# 2 Questions

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Q: 1. What valued direction does the client want to move in?

Q: 2: What is getting in their way?

# Where to start?

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A: What's the valued direction?

- Values clarification

- Goal setting & Committed Action

Or ...

B: What's in the way?

- Fusion => Defusion

- Avoidance => Acceptance

- Automaticity => Awareness/ engagement

# Where to start?

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For clients in crisis/panic/dissociative states:  
start with grounding/centering

For clients with major grief/loss:

Start with self-compassion

# The 'I'm Not Good Enough' Story

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- What's yours?

# Hands As Hallucinations

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In front of you is everything that matters: the people, places, activities you love etc. And the **problems/challenges** you need to face/deal with.

Now get caught up in your **thoughts**

Notice 3 things: 1) How much are you missing out on? 2) How disconnected and disengaged are you? 3) How difficult is it to take action, to do the things that make your life work? (give examples)

Now slowly separate from your thoughts

What's your view of the room like now? How much easier is it to engage and connect? How much easier is it to take action?

Notice these things (i.e. hands) haven't disappeared. If you can use them, do so. If not, just let them sit there.

# Step-by-step: Defusion

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## **1.IDENTIFY ‘PROBLEMATIC’ THOUGHTS**

- What does your mind say to you about that?
- When your mind wants to beat you up/ hold you back/ bring you down, what kind of things does it say to you?
- If I could listen in, what would I actually hear inside your head?

# Step-by-step: Defusion

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## 2. IDENTIFY CONSEQUENCES of FUSION.

- When you *get hooked by* these thoughts, what happens?
- How does your behaviour change?
- If I was watching on a video, what would I see or hear?
- And what happens after that?
- And how does that impact on your life?



# Step-by-step: Defusion

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## 3. **FUSION IS THE PROBLEM.**

So when you **get hooked by/pushed around by/ caught up in/ fused with** these thoughts, they have a big impact on you.

The more you get **fused/hooked/caught up/pushed around** by them, the more stressed you are, the more you get you stuck, the harder life gets

# Step-by-step: Defusion

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## 4. **NORMALISE 'NEGATIVE THOUGHTS'**

- These are perfectly natural thoughts that most people have
  - My mind is very much like your mind
  - Psycho-education: how the mind evolved to think negatively

# Step-by-step: Defusion

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## 5. NEW POSSIBILITY.

- I don't know how to stop your mind from generating those thoughts.
- But I do know a different way of responding to them, so that when they show up, you don't have to get all caught up in them.
- You don't have to struggle with them or get pushed around by them.
- Would you be interested in learning how to do that?

# The Positive Affirmation Myth

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- 2009 study in *Psychological Science*
- J. V. Wood, J.W. Lee, W.Q. Perunovic
- *'Positive Self-Statements: Power for some, peril for others'*
- Let's try it for ourselves



# Values

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- ‘Desired qualities of ongoing action’
- Heart’s deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being
- How you want to treat anyone or anything
- Qualities you want to embody
- Can usually be said in one or two words

# Goals or Values?

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- Nurturing, maintaining and caring for my body
- Lose 10 kg
- Get a great job
- Being helpful, friendly and responsible in the work place

# Goals or Values?

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- Buy a house
- Being supportive, protective, caring for my family
- Get good grades
- Curiosity, learning, persistence



# Goals or Values?

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- Being sensual and intimate
- Have an orgasm
- Have children
- Being caring, kind, loving

# Goals or Values?

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- Win the match
- Playing enthusiastically, fairly, skillfully
- Being creative
- Write a book
- *Why does this distinction matter?*

# Trickier: Goals or Values?

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- Be respected
- Be respectful
- Be loved
- Be loving

# Needs vs Values

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- Values are:
- how I want to behave as I try to get my needs met
- how I want to behave when I *don't* get my needs met
- how I want to behave when I *do* get my needs met

# The Sweet Spot - part 1

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- Bring to mind a memory that conveys some of the sweetness and richness of life
- Make it vivid
- Make room for all the feelings that arise (sadness often shows up)
- Share it with your partner

# The sweet spot – part 2

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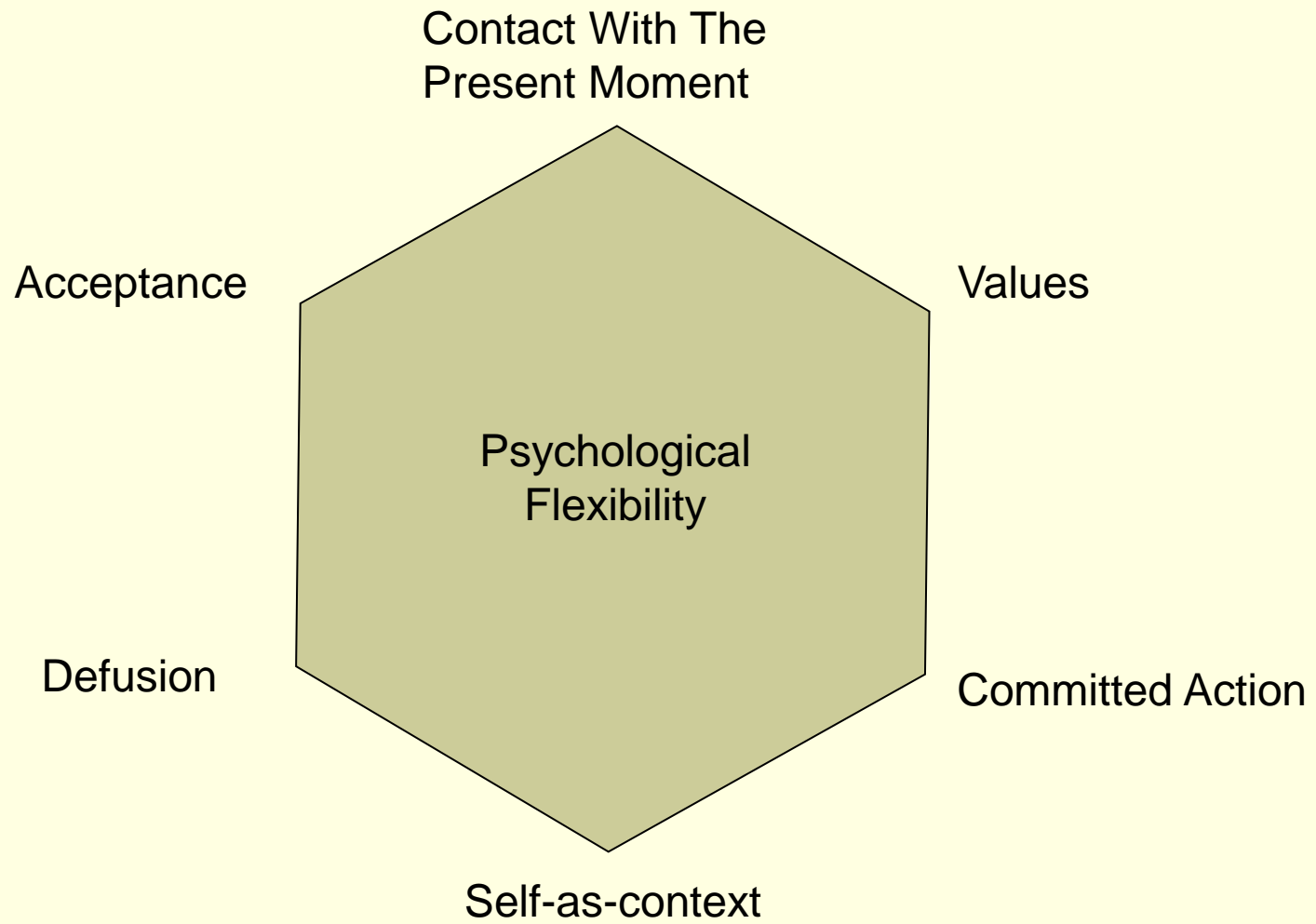
- What does this memory reveal about what matters to you?
- What personal qualities were you showing?
- How were you treating yourself, others, the world around you?
- What does this suggest about the way you'd like to behave, or the things you'd like to do, moving forwards?

# The Resilience Formula

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4 approaches to any problem situation:

1. Leave
2. Stay & change what can be changed
3. Stay & accept what can't be changed & live by your values
4. Stay & give up & do stuff that makes it worse





# True or False?

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Increasing your self-esteem will improve your performance

People with high self-esteem are more likable, have better relationships, and make better impressions

People with high self-esteem make better leaders

# ALL FALSE!

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Ref: The Association for Psychological Science  
Task Force on Self-esteem

Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, Vohs

*Psychological Science in The Public Interest –  
Vol 4, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2003*

# True or False?

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High self-esteem correlates with egotism, narcissism, and arrogance

High self-esteem correlates with prejudice & discrimination

High self-esteem correlates with self-deception, and defensiveness when faced with honest feedback

# ALL TRUE!

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Ref: The Association for Psychological  
Science Task Force on Self-esteem

Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, Vohs

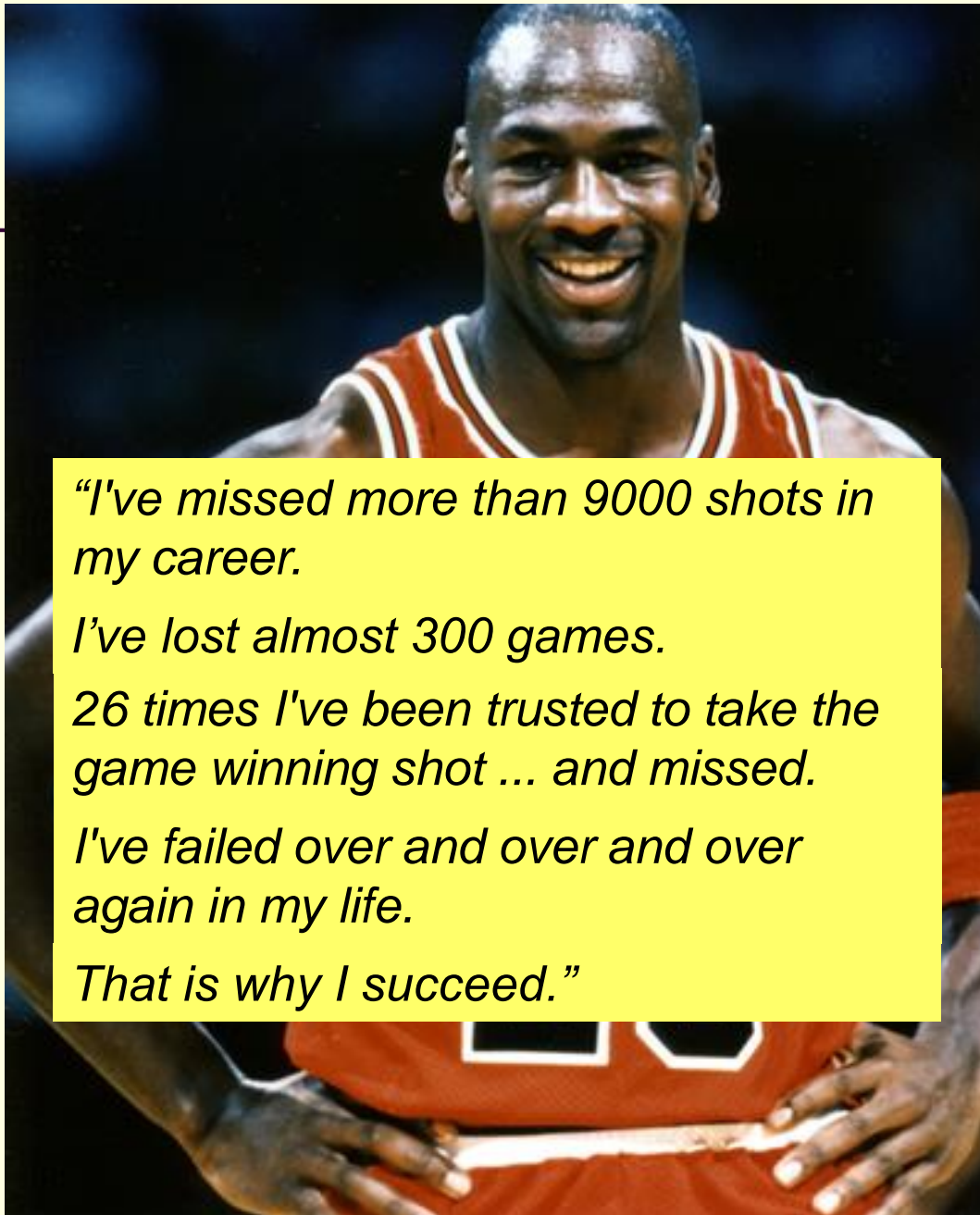
*Psychological Science in The Public Interest –  
Vol 4, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2003*

The Alternative to Self-Esteem?

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# Self-Acceptance & Self-Compassion

Why?



*“I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career.*

*I've lost almost 300 games.*

*26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot ... and missed.*

*I've failed over and over and over again in my life.*

*That is why I succeed.”*

# Self-Acceptance

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You are not who you think you are!

# Which Is The Real Africa?

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Neither!

A documentary of Africa is not Africa.  
Your mind is like the world's greatest  
documentary maker



# Which Is The Real you?

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Take 30 seconds to tell your partner as much as possible about who you are as a human being – just positive stuff

Take 30 seconds to tell your partner as much as possible about who you are as a human being – just negative stuff

# Self-Acceptance

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You are not who you think you are!

If your mind tells you a negative story ...

‘Thanks, mind!’

And if it’s a positive story ...

‘Thanks, mind!’

**=>The ‘Good self/Bad Self’ exercise**

**You are one being:  
Physical self (body)  
Thinking Self (mind)  
& Observing Self**

# The Conceptualised Self

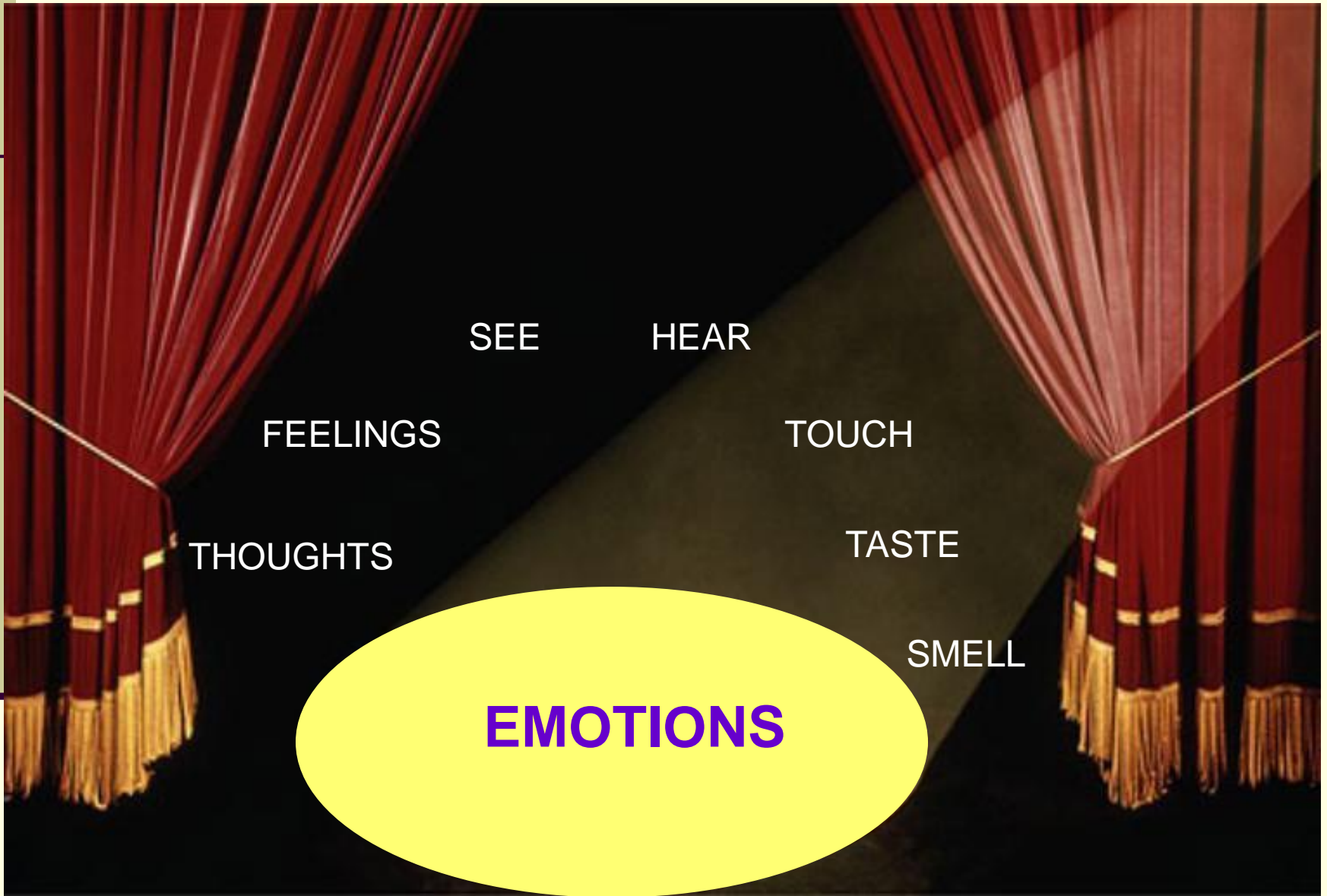
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Your 'conceptualised self' is important and often useful. You wouldn't want to get rid of it

You may even want to work on developing it

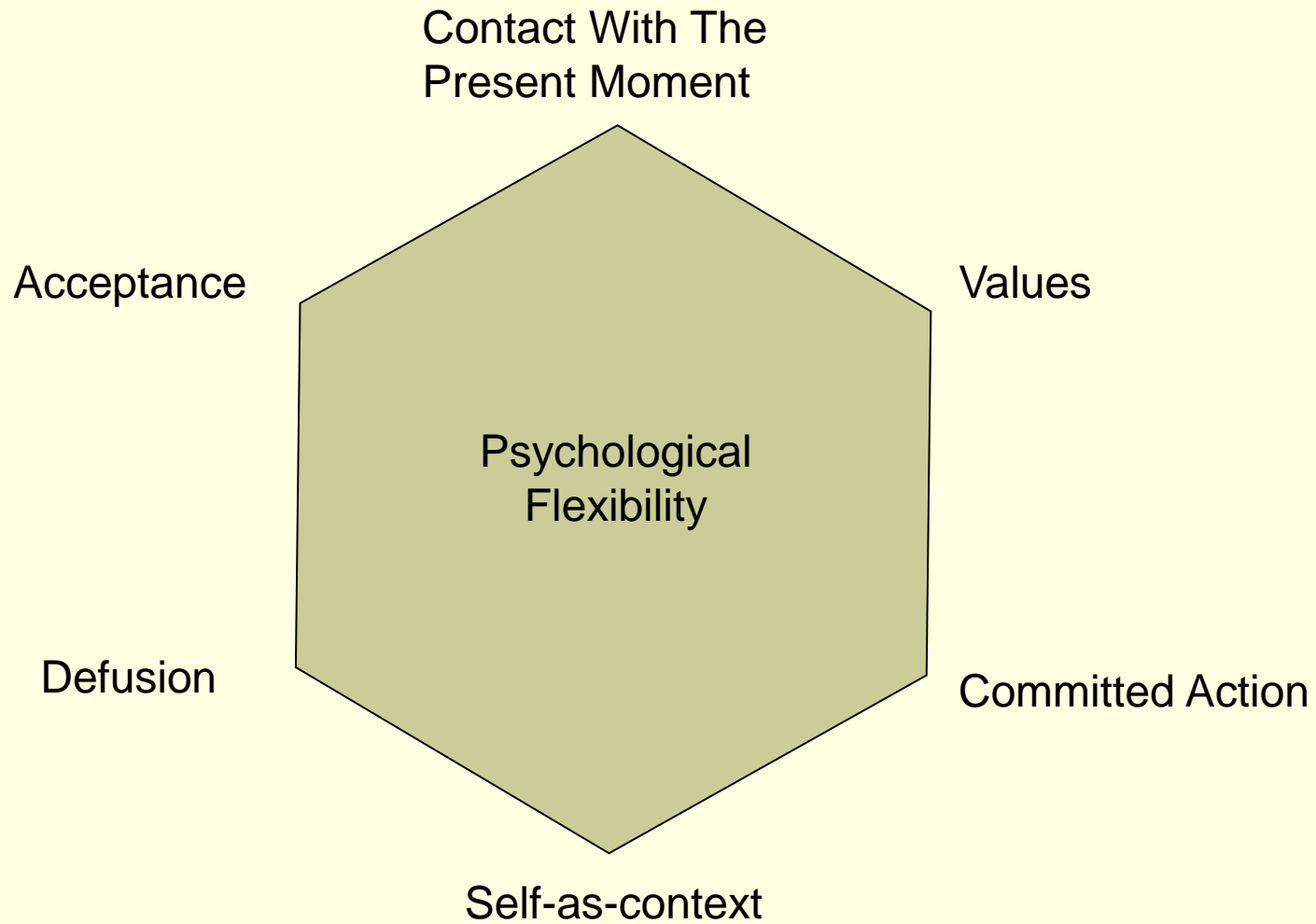
**But hold it lightly – *it is not you!***

**=>The 'I am' exercise**



# The Observing Self







# SHAMELESS ADVERTISING ....

## Advanced ACT Workshop: Part 2 Training

### *From "chunky, clunky" ACT to "fluid, flexible" ACT*

- Learn how to rapidly conceptualise cases and figure out ACT interventions for a wide range of clinical issues ( e.g. trauma, addiction, depression)
- Hone the art of self-compassion
- Discover the secrets of motivating the unmotivated
- How to work with mandated/coerced clients
- ACT as a brief intervention
- Get to values with clients who say 'I don't know' or 'I don't have any'
- Get 'unstuck' & turn 'stuckness' into growth
- Interrupt disruptive behaviour in session
- Get on and stay on track with clients who get easily distracted (and train task-focused attention while you're at it)
- Anger, resentment, and forgiveness
- Urge surfing
- Turn boring, frustrating sessions into vital, engaging encounters





**ACT**

**RFT**

**ABA**

**Functional Contextualism**

In front of you is everything that matters: the people, places, activities you love etc.  
And all the problems/challenges you need to solve/tackle

Now push these feelings away from you, hard as you can

Notice 3 things: 1) How tiring is it? 2) How distracting is it; how difficult is it to fully engage or connect? 3) How difficult is it to take action, to do the things that make your life work? (give examples)

Now rest it on your lap.

How much less effort is that? How much easier is it to engage and connect? How much easier is it now to take action?

Notice your feelings (i.e. the paper) haven't disappeared. But you have a new way of responding to them, so they don't hold you back or tie you down or stop you engaging in your life

# Creative Hopelessness

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- **What have you tried?**
- **How has it worked, long term?**
- **What has it cost you?**

# An Important Close Relationship

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- **What is painful or difficult in this relationship?**
- **Tap into a painful emotion – e.g. fear, sadness, anger, guilt – so you can work with it**

# **NAME** your feelings

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- **N**otice
- **A**cknowledge
- **M**ake room
- **E**xpand awareness

# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## **1.IDENTIFY ‘PROBLEMATIC’ FEELINGS/EMOTIONS/SENSATIONS**

- Identify them
- Where are they? What are they like?
- Name them
- Validate & normalise them

# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## 2. NORMALISE.

- Life is painful
- The 'reality gap'
- Inevitability of fear/anxiety when you step out of your comfort zone
- Psycho-education on emotions
- *Q: How would you expect someone else to feel under these circumstances?*

# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## **3. IDENTIFY CONSEQUENCES of AUTOMATICITY & AVOIDANCE.**

When you get pushed around by these feelings,  
how does your behaviour change?

If I was watching on a video, what would I see  
or hear?

And what happens after that?

And how does that impact on your life?



# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## **3. IDENTIFY CONSEQUENCES of AUTOMATICITY & AVOIDANCE.**

When you get into a struggle with these feelings  
– what happens?

Do you ever try to get rid of them? What sort of  
things do you do to make them go away?

How long do they go away for?

And do those strategies have any long term  
drawbacks/costs/side-effects?

# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## **4. AUTOMATICITY/AVOIDANCE IS THE PROBLEM**

- So when these feelings show up, either they push you around/control you/ hold you back/ bring you down ...
- or you get caught up in a struggle with them, which in the long term makes things worse.
- And the more that happens, the more you get you stuck, the harder life gets.

# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## 5. NEW POSSIBILITY.

- I don't know how to stop painful feelings showing up. Everybody has them.
- But I do know a different way of responding to them ..
- So that when they show up, you don't have to get caught up/ pushed around/ overwhelmed by them ...
- And you don't have to struggle with them or fight them, either.

# Step-by-step: Acceptance

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## 5. NEW POSSIBILITY.

- It's a new way of handling painful feelings, so ***they have much less impact and influence over you.***
- It's radically different from everything else you've tried.
- Would you be interested in learning how to do that?

# Hold Yourself Kindly



# Drop Anchor



# Take A Stand

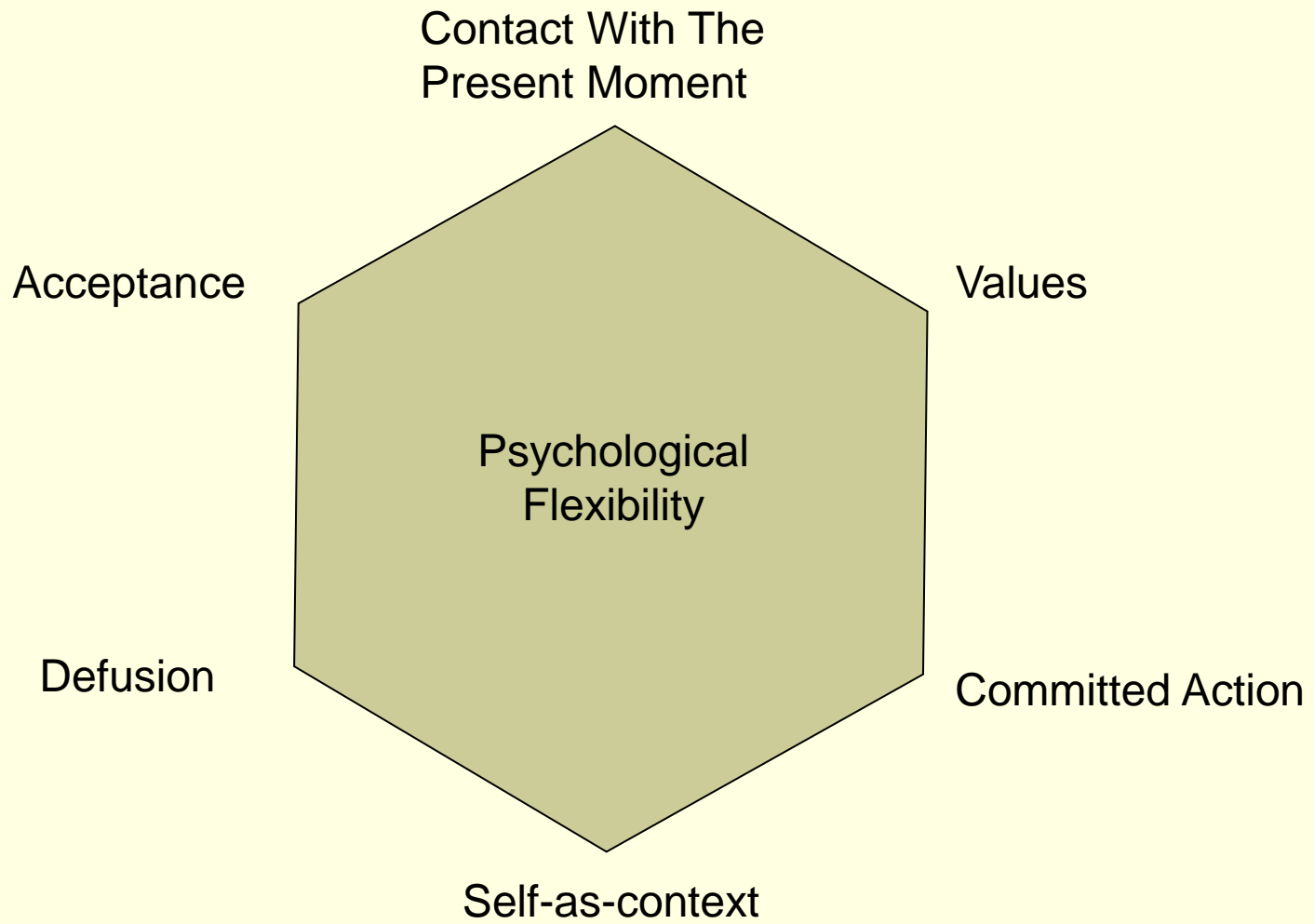
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# Find The Treasure







What you stand for

Your personal strengths and qualities

The role you have played in their life

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# Values Are Not:

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- Goals
- What you want or need from others
- Rules or commandments, codes of conduct
- 'Shoulds', 'musts', obligations

# Properties of Values

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- Here and now
- Freely chosen
- Dynamic and evolving
- Never completed
- Intrinsically rewarding

# Properties of Values

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- Often need prioritising
- Never need justifying
- Values , Virtues & Strengths
- Pursue vigorously, but hold lightly

# How To Clarify Values

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- See worksheet

# The Resilience Formula

---

4 approaches to any problem situation:

1. Leave
2. Stay & change what can be changed
3. Stay & accept what can't be changed & live by your values
4. Stay & give up & do stuff that makes it worse

# What Prevents Action?

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- **FEAR**
- **Fusion**
- **Excessive goals**
- **Avoidance of discomfort**
- **Remoteness from values**



# The Antidote

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- **DARE**
- **Defusion**
- **Acceptance of discomfort**
- **Realistic goals**
- **Embracing values**