

DSH and Adolescents

What does ACT offer?

Giselle Bahr
Wellington ACT Centre
giselle@actwellington.co.nz
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ACT

- A contextual behaviour therapy
- Derived from Relational Frame Theory (RFT)
 - Behavioural theory of how language and cognition develop and function
- Based in Functional Contextualism
 - Can't separate behaviour from its context

“ACT is a name for treatments that deliberately target psychological flexibility” (Hayes, 2015)

- Being aware of thoughts and feelings that unfold in the present moment and, depending on what the situation affords, persisting or changing behaviour to pursue central interests and goals
- Psychological *inflexibility* – behaviour is excessively controlled by one’s thoughts, feelings and other internal experiences at the expense of more effective and meaningful actions
 - an over-reliance on rule governed behaviour

Psychological Flexibility

- Psychological inflexibility correlated with (Bryan, et al 2015; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010; Levin et al, 2014):
 - more severe PTSD
 - higher levels of depression
 - more anxiety
 - slower improvements in BPD symptoms
 - substance use disorders
 - eating disorders

Psychological Flexibility

- Increasing psychological flexibility includes...
 - **Decreasing experiential avoidance**
 - Improving discrimination skills
 - Decreasing unhelpful pliance
 - Decreasing cognitive fusion
 - Weakening attachments to conceptualised self

Experiential Avoidance

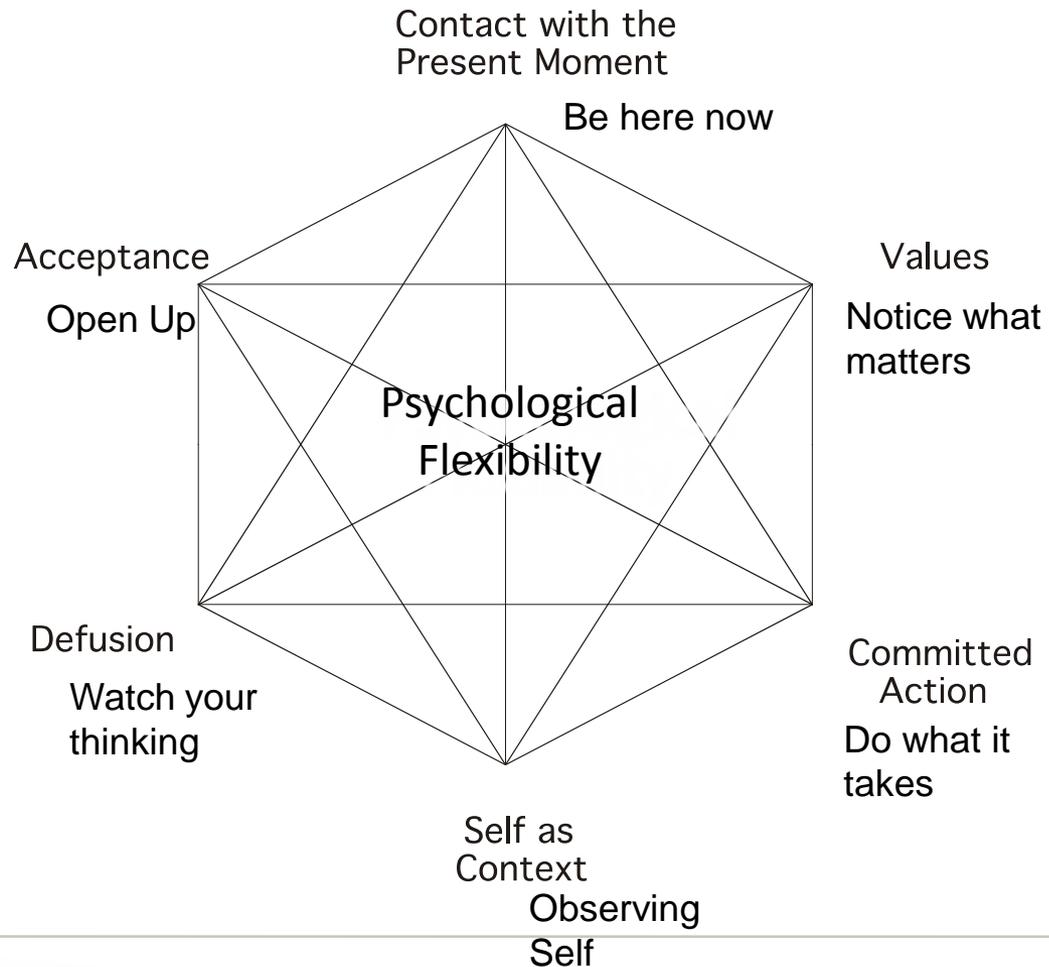
- Efforts to control or avoid
 - unpleasant emotions,
 - upsetting memories,
 - troubling thoughts,
 - sensations or physical pain
- and the contexts that elicit them, even when doing so creates problems over the long run

High experiential avoidance correlates with:

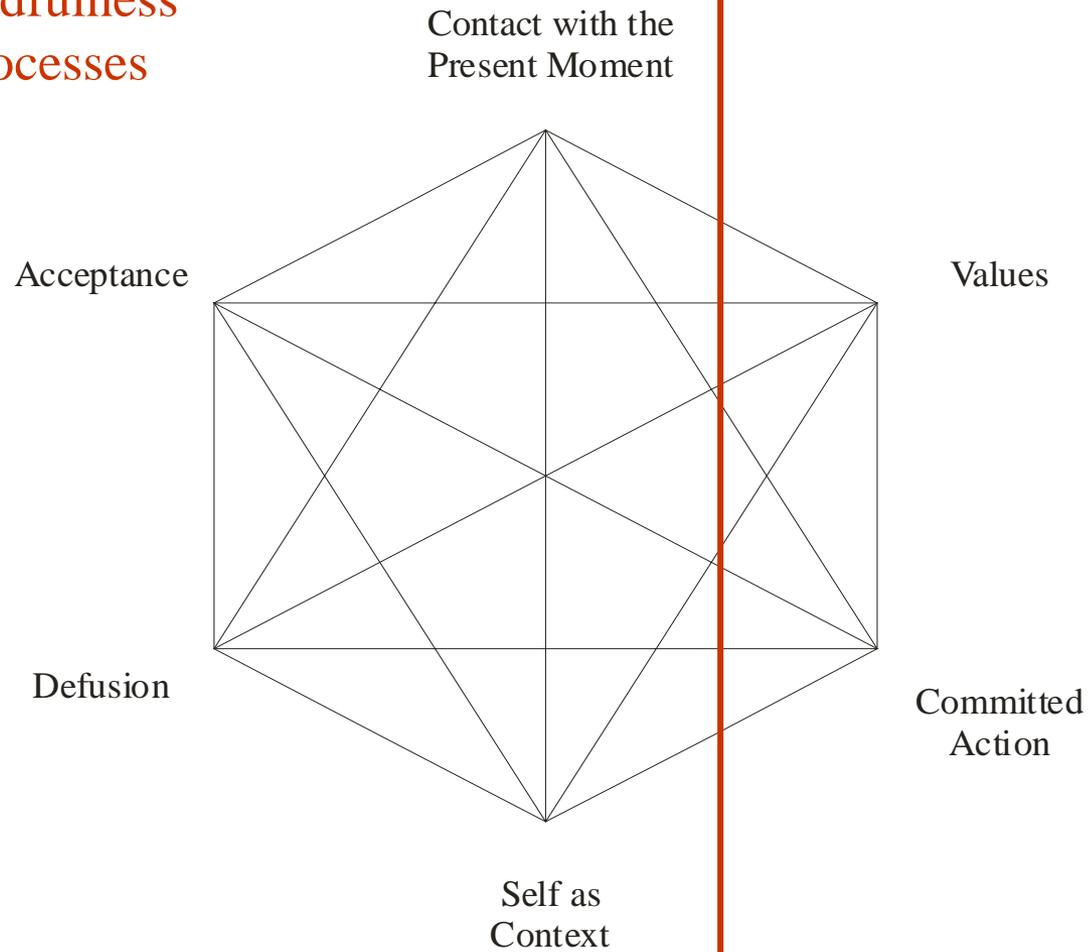
- **DSH** (Venta, 2013)
- depression
- substance abuse
- addiction severity
- rumination
- GAD, PA, and social anxiety
- PTSD
- BPD symptoms
- eating disorders

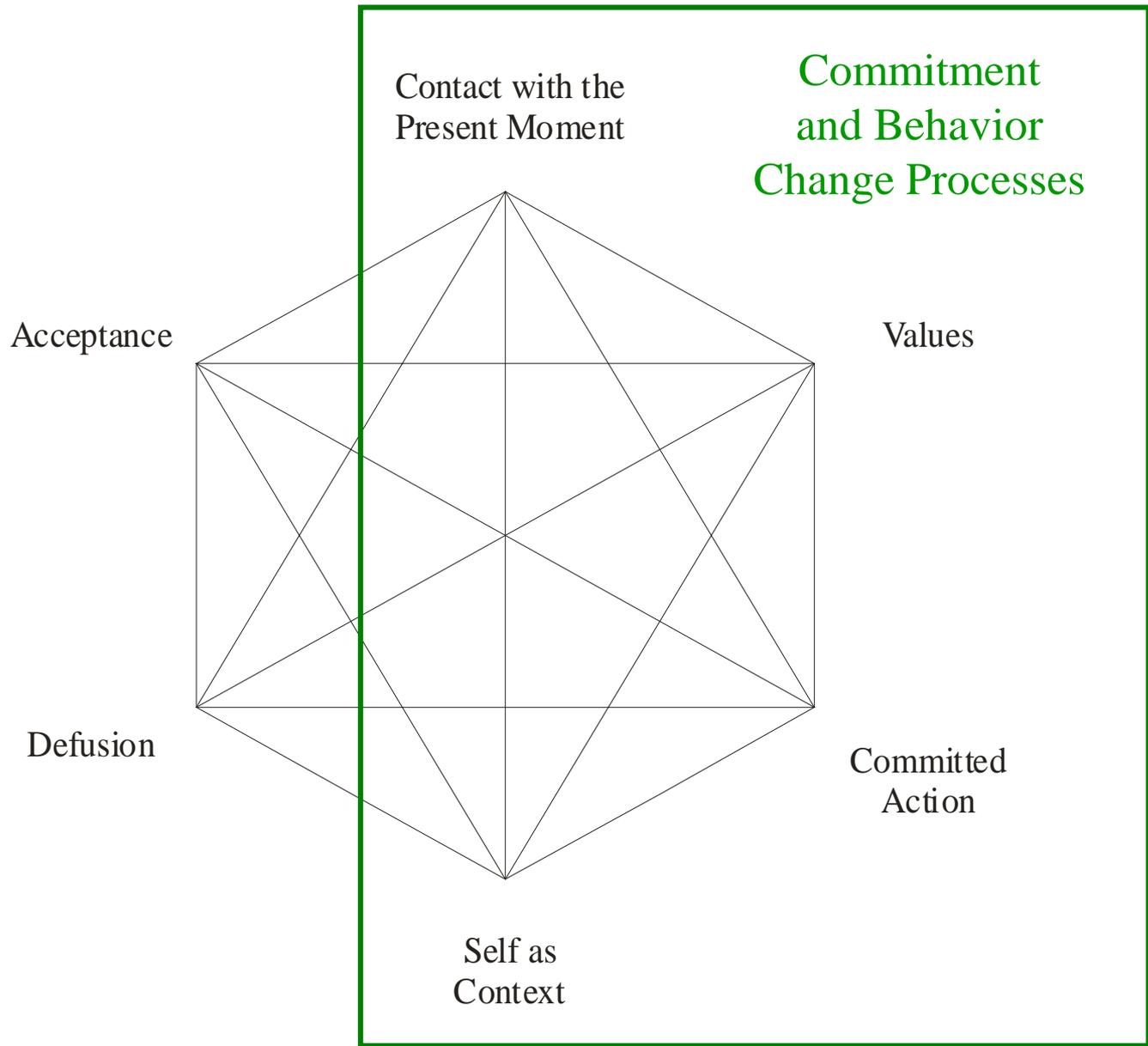
I'll say a word...

The Hexaflex



Acceptance and Mindfulness Processes



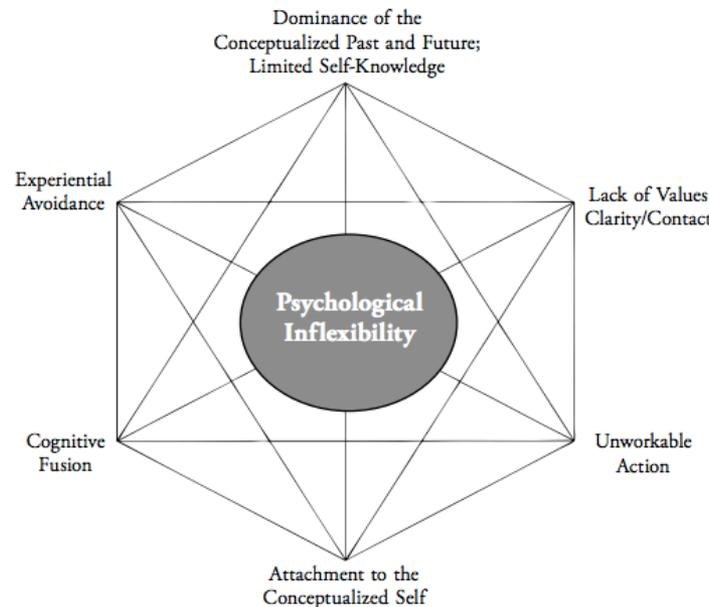


DSH on the Hexaflex

Ruminate about past, worry about future, weak awareness of (aversive) present moment

Escape from painful internal experiences: unpleasant memories,
I have to make this stop

Fusion with thoughts:
It'll never get better, I can't tolerate this



Unclear values, absence of connection to values

Immediate, avoidance oriented goals, impulsivity, persistent inaction

No distinction between self and experience; seeing self as broken, damaged
hopeless

ACT, DSH and Adolescents

- Although no specific RCTs combining ACT, DSH and adolescents...
- Support in principle:
 - More EA (thought suppression and alexithymia) correlated with more DSH (Howe-Martin et al, 2012)
 - Increased psychological flexibility in college students leads to fewer suicide attempts later (Barnes et al 2016)

ACT Evidence

- First paper published in 1984;
 - first RCT 1986;
 - the long silence;
 - now 136 RCTs
- Strong support for chronic pain, modest support for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, OCD, psychosis, smoking cessation and weight loss
- Evidence that ACT has superior effect at follow up than at completion (Luoma, 2012; Arch et al, 2012)
- Evidence that ACT works how we expect it to work (Villatte, J. et al, 2016)

ACT and Adolescents

- ACT used successfully with adolescents for OCD, depression, pain, anxiety, risky sexual behaviour (Halliburton & Cooper, 2015; Livheim et al, 2015; Swain et al, 2014)
- Increased parental psychological flexibility correlated with lower levels of adolescent distress (Brassell et al, 2015)
- New models such as DNA-V (Hayes & Ciarrochi, 2016)
- *Stuff That Sucks: Accepting what you can't change and Committing to what you can* by Ben Sedley

ACT and DSH

- Wise Choices - ACT groups for BPD (Morton et al, 2012)
 - Melbourne, Wellington
- Acceptance-Based Emotion Regulation Group Therapy – informed by ACT, DBT and MCBT (Gratz & Gunderson, 2006)
 - DSH and Experiential Avoidance improved, especially at follow up
- ACT versus Matrix (Ortega et al, 2016)
 - Mexico

But there's more

- Focused ACT (Strosahl and Robinson)
- Clinical RFT (Törneke; Cairns; Villatte, Villatte & Hayes)
- The Matrix (Polk)
- Wise Choices (Morton & Shaw)
- DNA-V (Hayes & Ciarrochi)

And there's cross fertilisation

- with CFT – Compassion Focused ACT (Tirch)
- with DBT – ERGT (Gratz & Gunderson)
- with EMDR – Veterans Affairs brief intervention

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