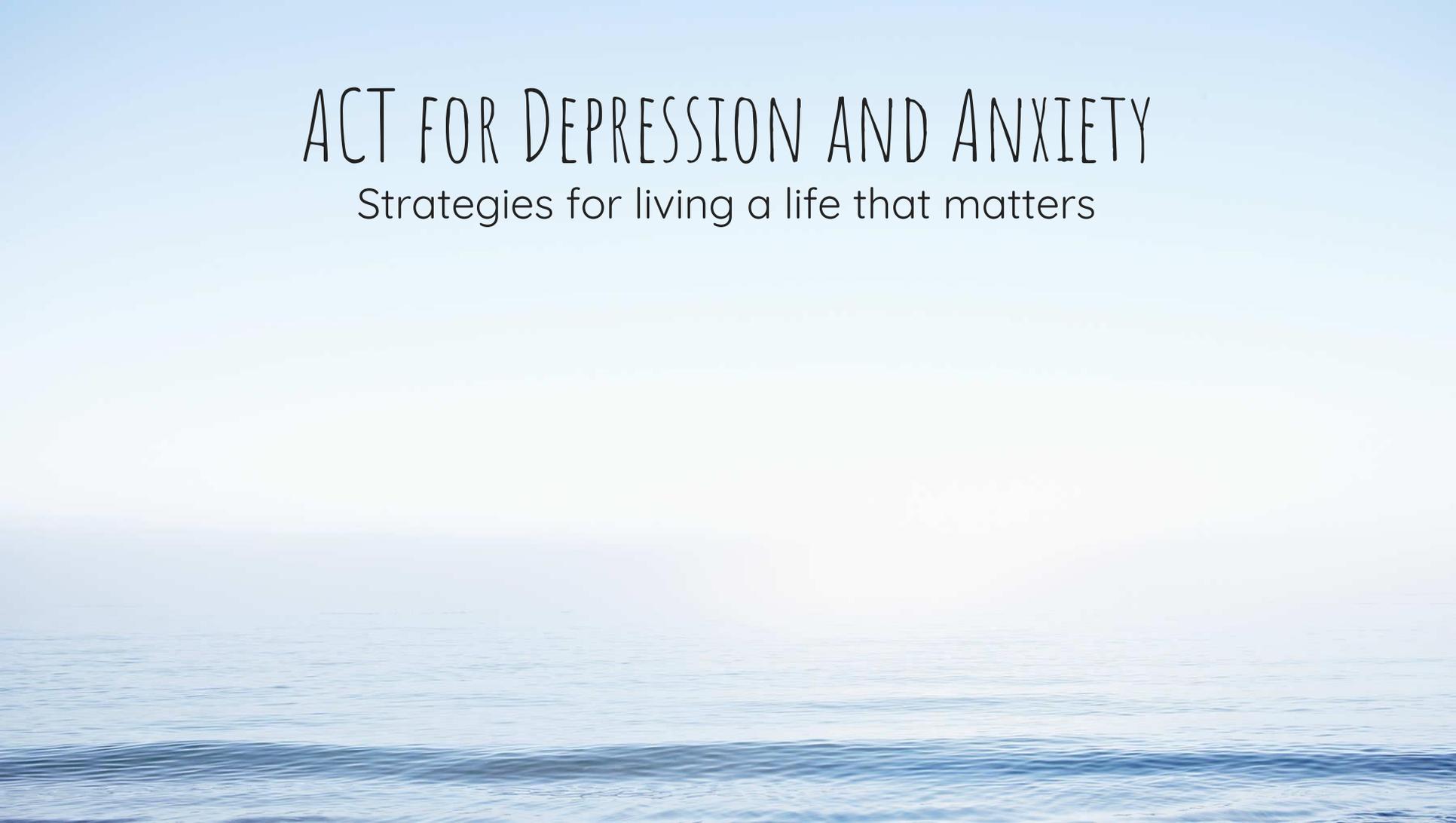


ACT FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Strategies for living a life that matters



ACT and Values

Deep down inside, what is important to you?

What do you want your life to be about?

What sort of person do you want to be?

What sort of relationships do you want to build?

If you weren't struggling with your feelings or avoiding your fears, what would you channel your time and energy into doing?

Summarizing ACT so far...

The aim of ACT is to create a rich, full and meaningful life, while effectively handling the pain and stress that inevitably goes with it.

Summarizing ACT so far...

ACT achieves this in two main ways:

- (1) ACT helps you develop psychological skills to deal with your painful thoughts, feelings, sensations and urges more effectively, in such a way that they have much less impact and influence over you.

Summarizing ACT so far...

- (2) ACT helps you to clarify what is truly important and meaningful to you —what we call your “values”— and then use that knowledge to guide, inspire, and motivate you when making changes in your life.

Summarizing ACT so far...

Accept your internal experiences
Choose a valued direction
Take action

What are values?

Values are:

- ❑ chosen life directions
- ❑ how you want to *behave* on an ongoing basis
- ❑ how you want to "be" or "act" in any situation
- ❑ freely chosen by you because you *want* them, not because you *should* have them

~ *from Act Made Simple, Dr Russ Harris*

What are values?

Values...

- ❑ are 'a desired quality of ongoing action'
- ❑ *Are your heart's deepest desires for the sort of person you want to be and the things you want to do in your time on this planet - in other words, what you want to stand for in life'*
- ❑ *provide motivation & inspiration;*
- ❑ *provide guidance for your actions*
- ❑ *give life meaning;*
- ❑ *give a sense of abundance*

When you think about *values*, think verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Examples of values are:

- ❑ being loving and caring
- ❑ giving, sharing, and contributing
- ❑ being a good parent, friend, student, worker, partner, son, daughter, or sibling
- ❑ maintaining health and fitness
- ❑ giving back to the community
- ❑ spiritual / emotional growth

A simple way to differentiate goals from values is by using the 'compass metaphor':

“Values are like a compass. A compass gives you direction and keeps you on track when you’re traveling. And our values do the same for the journey of life. We use them to choose the direction in which we want to move and to keep us on track as we go. So when you act on a value, it’s like heading west. No matter how far west you travel, you never get there, there’s always further to go. But goals are like the things you try to achieve on your journey, they’re like the sights you want to see or the mountains you want to climb while you keep on traveling west.”

~ from Act Made Simple, Dr Russ Harris

Values are the direction, goals are what we achieve along the way:

Examples:

- ❑ Value = Physical Health → Goals = regular exercise, balanced diet, adequate sleep, etc.
- ❑ Value = Making A Difference → Goals = sponsor a child, volunteer, teach others, etc.
- ❑ Value: Spiritual Growth → Goals = pray, read bible, go to church, join a small group

THE COST OF AVOIDANCE TO OUR VALUES AND GOALS

Attempts to avoid our emotional distress (pushing away, distraction, self-soothing, etc.) can keep us from meeting our goals.

Attempts to avoid our emotional distress (pushing away, distraction, self-soothing, etc.) can lead us to act in ways that are against our values.

Not meeting our goals and failing to live up to our values can be discouraging, frustrating and fearful. This creates more distress and the cycle continues.

THE BENEFITS OF ACCEPTANCE TO OUR VALUES AND GOALS

Accepting all my internal experiences helps us to focus our time and energy on reaching my goals.

Accepting all my internal experiences allows me to act in ways that are true to my values.

Moving closer to my goals and living up to my values promotes peace, joy, confidence and hope. This will in turn reduce distress (a bi-product, not the goal), prepare us to face future stressors, and diminish the power of internal distress on our lives.

DEFUSION AND VALUED LIVING

INTERNAL STRUGGLES

(Chessboard metaphor)

Written & Narrated by
Dr. Russ Harris



Dr. Russ Harris
Psychotherapist
Author "The Happiness Trap"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz_nexLqY_8

ACT and Values

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EXERCISE:

WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

Exercise: Values/Pain Card

FRONT OF CARD

DOMAIN:

Values:

BACK OF CARD

PAIN:

Thought -

Feeling -

Sensation -

Urge -

Exercise: Values/Pain Card

FRONT OF CARD

DOMAIN:

Family/Relationships

Values:

Being a caring,
present,
dependable dad

BACK OF CARD

PAIN:

Thought - Why is she being so difficult? What can I do to fix this? What if she is like this in her other relationships?

Feeling - Confusion, Frustration, Fear

Sensation - Tightness in chest, on edge, on guard

Urge - Withdraw, say nothing

More thoughts on IE's and Values

Unwanted internal experiences (IE) are not harmful in and of themselves; they only become so in a context of cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance.

With cognitive fusion, we view our internal experiences as literal fact, and become threatened by them. Naturally we want to get rid of the “threat” and so we avoid situations where that “threat: may arise..

More thoughts on IE's and Values

Fusion with IE's leads to attempts to control and get rid of our IE (it keeps coming back) and avoidance moves us away from our values (we do things that harm us, or don't do things that matter to us).

Many attempts to control and avoid unwanted internal experiences increases unwanted internal experiences (e.g. thought-stopping).

Many attempts to control and avoid unwanted internal experiences lead us away from our values and create psychological and/or physical harm (e.g. depression, anxiety, addictions).

More thoughts on IE's and Values

Rather than control, we can practice defusion (observing and labelling):

- ❑ Looking at thoughts, rather than from thoughts
- ❑ Noticing thoughts, feelings, sensations and urges rather than being hooked by them.
- ❑ Seeing thoughts, feelings, sensations and urges as what they are, not as what they seem to be.
- ❑ Aim of Defusion is NOT to feel better, nor to get rid of unwanted internal experiences
- ❑ Aim of Defusion IS to reduce influence of internal distress upon behaviour; to facilitate being psychologically present & engaged in experience; to increase distress tolerance so that we can choose to live according to our values.