



ABSTRACT

Brief ACT workshops can be presented to parents in local communities within support groups, churches, and social clubs. Values driven decision making is highly congruent and consistent with organizational efforts toward better living. Additionally, the prevalence and cost of experiential avoidance is often consistent with missions of these groups and ACT based interventions are very useful in highlighting these topic areas. Activities and content of successful workshops in this setting are highlighted in this poster. Areas of hexaflex topic coverage for one-time, brief workshops to help parents in coping and decision making are presented.

BACKGROUND

Traditional behavioral interventions for parents regarding their children emphasize the parental employment of strategies such as clear commands and the use of rewards and punishment to influence, control, change, illicit, or decrease behavioral responses in their children (e.g. Long et al, 1994). Parents often describe their greatest parenting challenges and conflicts with children being preceded by the feeling of fear. Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), which focuses on enhancing flexibility and mindfulness and on achieving core life values, represents a newer paradigm in parent training. ACT is based on a "hexaflex" model, which includes acceptance, cognitive fusion, being present, self as context, values, and committed action (McHugh, 2011). ACT has been suggested for use in family therapy with adolescents through enhancing traditional change-oriented approaches such as Behavioral Modification Training by integrating acceptance and values strategies into family therapy (Greco & Eifert, 2004). *In essence, parents can be encouraged to parent out of their values rather than their fears.* In addition, the assumptions of mindfulness-based models of parent training have been compared to those of traditional behavioral parent training with the resultant suggestion that a new model of parent training might teach the strategies of facilitative listening, distancing, and motivated action plans in addition to effective behavioral interventions (Dumas, 2005). ACT has been demonstrated to increase value-oriented behavior and enhance quality of life for families, including families with children who have autism, obsessive compulsive disorders, behavioral problems, and chronic pain (Blackledge & Hayes, 2006; Coyne & Wilson, 2004; Donnelly, 2011; McCracken & Gauntlett-Gilbert, 2011). In a similar vein, the parent training seminar model described in this presentation emphasizes teaching caregivers to parent from values rather than from fear of losing control (values parent vs. fear/control agenda parent). It is believed that helping parents navigate internal parenting struggles and values conflicts clears the way for learning and applying new skills.

COVERAGE

TOPIC	DETAILS/EXAMPLES	CORE COMPONENTS
DEVELOPMENTAL OR PARENTING CHALLENGES	Adolescence: Rebellion, Peer Influence	ACCEPTANCE
RECENT PERSONAL STRUGGLE	Bringing to mind emotions present in that situation...often fear; parenting out of emotion not values	SELF-AS-CONTEXT DEFUSION
UNWORKABILITY OF CONTROL	"Just stop it!" doesn't erase parenting fears or change behavior in children	ACCEPTANCE WILLINGNESS DEFUSION
WILLINGNESS	Be willing to be out of breath	DEFUSION BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION
PARENT FROM VALUES INSTEAD OF EMOTION	Identify values in a quick VLQ, parents discuss similarities & differences	VALUES COMMITTED ACTION PRESENT MOMENT
COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN	Careful and deliberate reasons (values), boundaries, listening	VALUES PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

ACT EXERCISES

FIT WITH GROUP/BRIEF PARENT WORKSHOP ENVIRONMENT

- *Be willing to be out of breath*
- *Push/pull clipboard struggle*
- *Take your mind for a walk*
- *Metaphors: Quicksand, Garden, Monsters on the Bus, Tug of War with the Monster*
- *Sneaky Mind/Sticky thoughts*
- *VLQ quick values check, rank values from VLQ*
- *Caregivers discuss their VLQs*
- *Behavioral Activation, commit to one action in service of what matters*

DISCUSSION

Brief ACT infused parental workshops may be useful to parents and organizations in several ways:

- ☼ Helping parents identify whether in tough parenting moments they are making decisions motivated by fear, avoidance, or their valued life domains
- ☼ Creating a motivated moment for parents to consider, affirm, communicate about, or consider what their central values are and to rank these values to assist in especially tough parenting moments (i.e. avoid-avoid, approach-approach)
- ☼ Highlight experiential avoidance and its 'sneakiness' in parents & children. This also opens the door to talking about willingness and the difference between 'inside' and 'outside' the skin and control being an especially unworkable agenda long-term in parenting
- ☼ Teach parents to model values based decision making to their children and open this dialogue with their children
- ☼ Even short workshops (1 hour) can evoke useful discussion and fit with larger belief systems or agendas among community groups such as church groups, school groups, parenting groups such as moms that meet for playdates, and other special interest groups

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