

“Keeping Your Balls In The Air”

ACT World Conference 2013

Be Present

Contact with the Present Moment

Acceptance

Values

Psychological Flexibility

Open Up

Defusion

Do What Matters

Committed Action

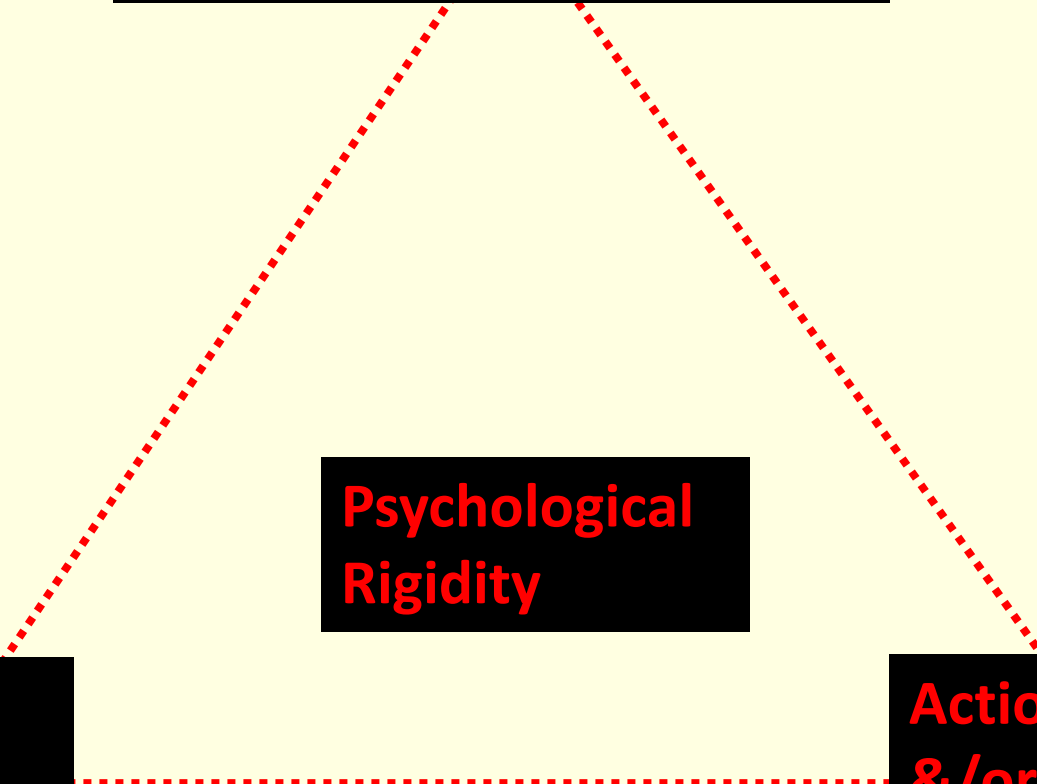
Self-as-context

**Disengaged; disconnected;
distracted; deficits in
perspective taking**

**Psychological
Rigidity**

**Experiential
avoidance &
fusion**

**Action ineffective
&/or inconsistent
with values**

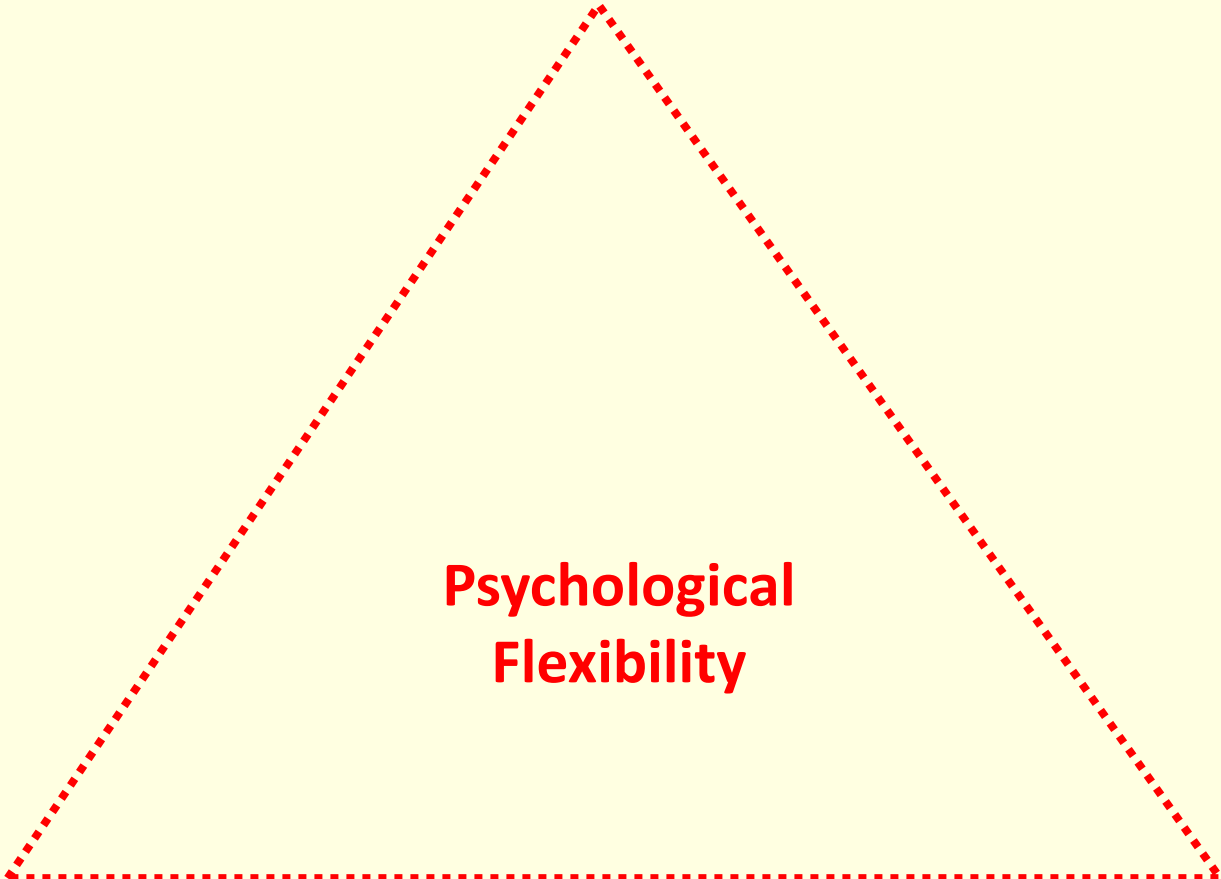


Be Present

**Psychological
Flexibility**

Open Up

**Do What
Matters**



Exercise: ten-minute history

- 1. Please complete this sentence: “I’ll know therapy is working when”**
- 2. If magic could happen and anything were possible, how would you be living your life differently? What would you start or stop; do more of or less of?**
- 3. If our work could improve one relationship in your life, which one would it be, and how would it improve?**
- 4. What is stopping these things from happening?**

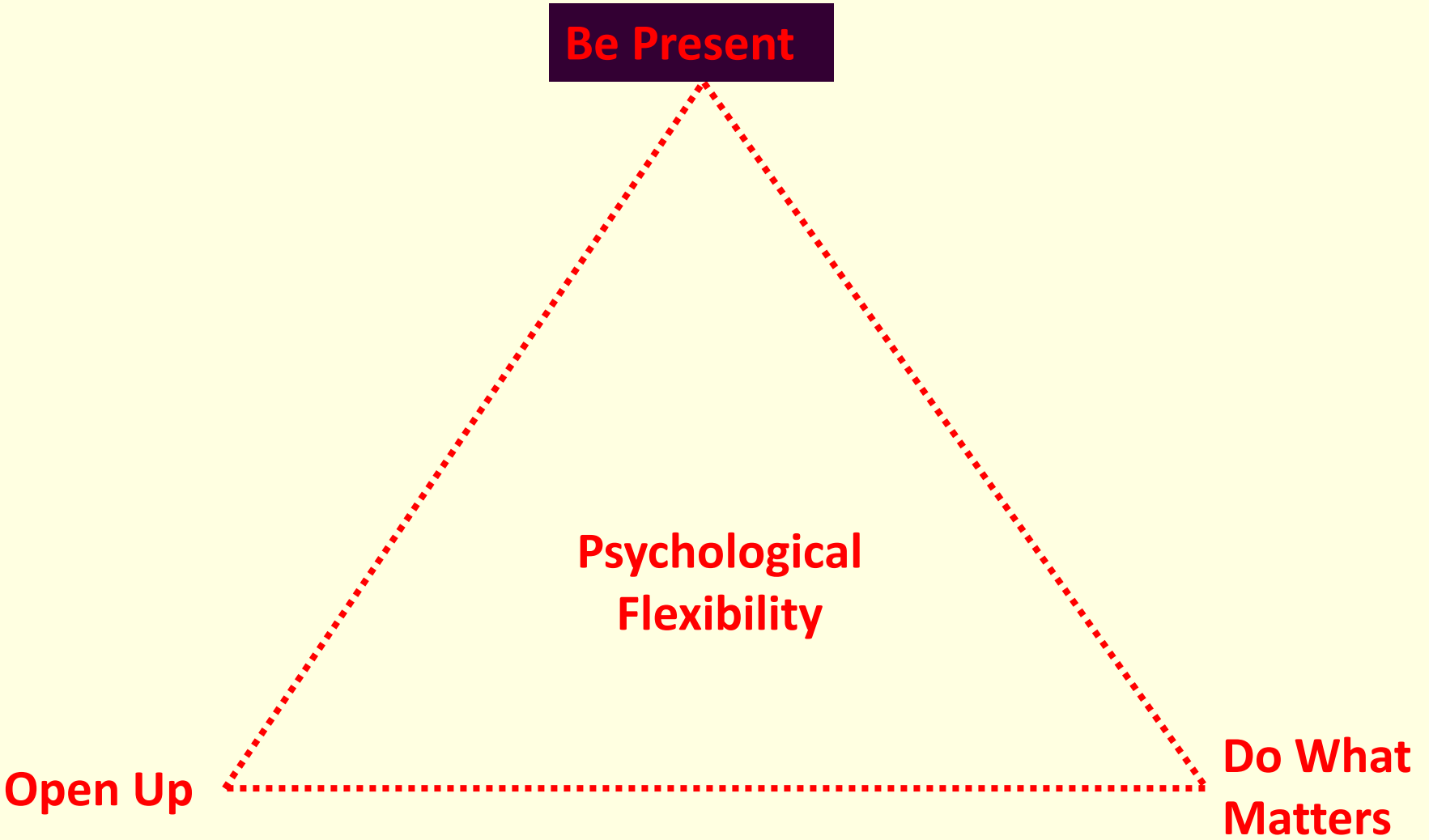
While taking history, note:

- a) **Avoidance – verbal & non-verbal**
- b) **Fusion – especially ‘rule-speak’**
- c) **Disconnection (internal &/or external), disengagement, distractedness**
- d) **Disconnection with values & goals**
- e) **Acceptance**
- f) **Defusion**
- g) **Presence, task-focussed attention, self-awareness**
- h) **Clarity/connection with values & goals**

Exercise: complete a triflex assessment

During your ten minute interview, what processes did you see?

Brainstorm where you might go in terms of intervention



URGE



HEAR
SEE TOUCH
FEELINGS TASTE
THOUGHTS SMELL

**ACCEPTANCE &
SELF-COMPASSION**

PAIN

VALUES & ACTION

Drop Anchor



- So a painful thought/feeling/memory has just shown up, and I want to help you to handle it
- Push your feet hard into the floor
- Sit forward in your chair
- Push your hands hard together
- As well as this painful thought/feeling/memory, notice your body in the chair – hands, feet, back etc.
- Also look around – notice 5 things you can see
- Also notice 3 or 4 things you can hear
- Also notice you and I, working together
- So notice there is a painful thought/feeling/memory here – AND your body in the chair - AND a room around you - AND you and I working together on something you care about
- AND also notice you are fully in control of your actions right now; check it out – move your arms and legs

Gentler ways to get clients present?

What are you noticing now?

What's showing up for you?

What are you aware of?

And what else? And what else? And what else?

Can I get you to notice

Can you notice what your mind is saying?

Gentler ways to get clients present?

What are you noticing in your body?

Let's come back to what we're doing here, right now; to what this work is about

I've lost you; you're back

You seem distant/disengaged/distracted

I feel disconnected from you

Gentler ways to get clients present?

Let's come back to what we're doing here, right now; to what this work is about

Can we take a moment just to notice what is happening here, between you and me?

I'm noticing X, Y, Z ... and I wonder if you are, too?

Gentler ways to get clients present?

Do you notice how:

- Your mind keeps hooking you
- Your attention keeps wondering
- Whenever I ABC, you tend to DEF

Gentler ways to get clients present?

Can we just pause for a moment, and

- Take stock
- Notice what's going on
- Let the dust settle
- Take a moment to center ourselves

Be Present

Contact with the Present Moment

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Self-as-context

Self-as-context: 'new' definition

W T F ? ? ! ! !

Self-as-context: ‘new’ definition

“Flexible Perspective Taking”

Ability to observe and describe from a perspective or point of view

enables or facilitates many different experiences,

including theory of mind, empathy, compassion, self-compassion, acceptance, defusion

and a transcendent sense of self (often called ‘the observing self’).

A Bit of RFT



“I”



“You”



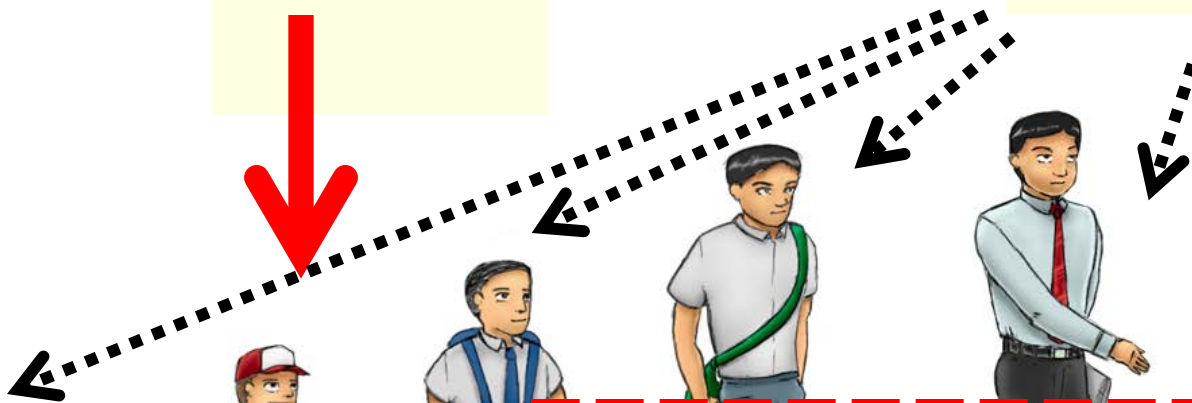
“Here”

“Now”



“There”

“Then”



DEICTIC FRAMING

“What are you doing here?”

“What am I doing here?”

“What were you doing there?”

“What was he doing there?”

“What are you doing now?”

“What are they doing now?”

“What was she doing then?”

“What were you doing then?”

The only constants?

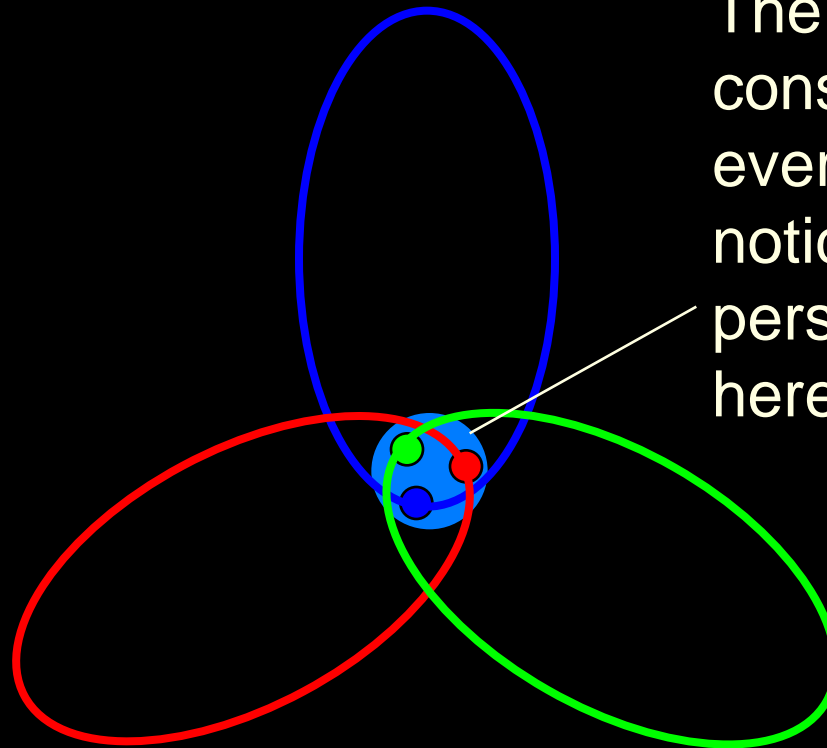
I
Here
Now

Perspective Taking Skills



Self-as-Context

'Flexible Perspective Taking'



The 'locus' of consciousness: everything is noticed from a perspective of 'I, here, now'

CONTACTING THE PRESENT MOMENT

I, here, now notice *WHAT* I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

SELF-AS-PROCESS

I, here, now notice *THAT* I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

DEFUSION

I, here, now notice my thoughts and see them as words and pictures

COMPASSION

I, here, now notice suffering and respond with kindness

Self-as-Context

ACCEPTANCE

I, here, now notice my thoughts and feelings and allow them to be as they are

EMPATHY

I, here, now notice what someone else is feeling and feel it too

TRANSCENDENT SELF or OBSERVING SELF

I, here, now notice *THAT* I am continuous, unchanging distinct from, & more than *WHAT* I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

COMMITTED ACTION

I, here, now notice my actions and take control of them

VALUES

I, here, now notice what is important and meaningful to me and put it into words



Water

TEA
WATER plus tea leaves

MILK
WATER..... plus various fats, proteins & sugars

ORANGE JUICE
WATER plus bits of orange

BEER
WATER plus beery stuff

COFFEE
WATER..... plus coffee bean extracts

Self-as-context

All current ACT Books (except one) have the ‘old’ definition:

**Self-as-context *is* the observing or transcendent self;
i.e. they are synonymous**

But is water synonymous with tea?

To make tea, we add stuff to water

**To ‘make’ an experience of the observing or
transcendent self, we add stuff to S-A-C**

Self-as-context plus what?

To experience observing/transcendent self:

Deictic framing (S-A-C)

I, here, now notice

Plus

THAT 'I' am (or 'a part of me' is)

Frame of distinction

distinct from

Plus

WHAT I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

Hierarchical frame

and there is more to 'me' than

Plus

these thoughts, feelings, sensations actions and body parts

Temporal frame

and 'I' am continuous & unchanging

whereas thoughts, feelings, sensations, actions and body parts constantly change

“Notice X”

- **Contact with the Present Moment** = notice WHAT you see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do
- **Self-as-process** = notice THAT you are seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, thinking, feeling, doing ...
... and noticing
- **Observing/transcendent self** = notice THAT you are noticing...
... and that the you (or ‘part of you’) which notices is *continuous, unchanging, distinct from, more than* WHAT you see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, and do
- **Self-as-context** = flexibly noticing from a perspective of I, here, now (i.e. flexible perspective taking)

The 'Observing Self': why bother?

1. Aids defusion – especially from the conceptualised self
2. Aids acceptance, willingness, and formal exposure: a 'safe place' inside you
3. Important aspect of spirituality
4. For survivors: a part of you was unharmed
5. Sense of stability in a chaotic life

NB: 1 & 2 are easily achieved through defusion & acceptance skills without need for explicit 'observing self' exercises.

Self-as-context = flexible perspective taking

Able to take perspective on 'self' (i.e. ongoing stream of thoughts, feelings, actions)?

'Self-as-process'

Able to take perspective on thoughts & feelings?

'Foundation' for defusion & acceptance

Able to take perspective on self-story?

'Foundation' for defusion from the conceptualized self

Able to take perspective on one's own noticing?

'Foundation' for transcendent or observing self

Able to take perspective on another?

'Foundation' for Theory of Mind, Empathy, Compassion

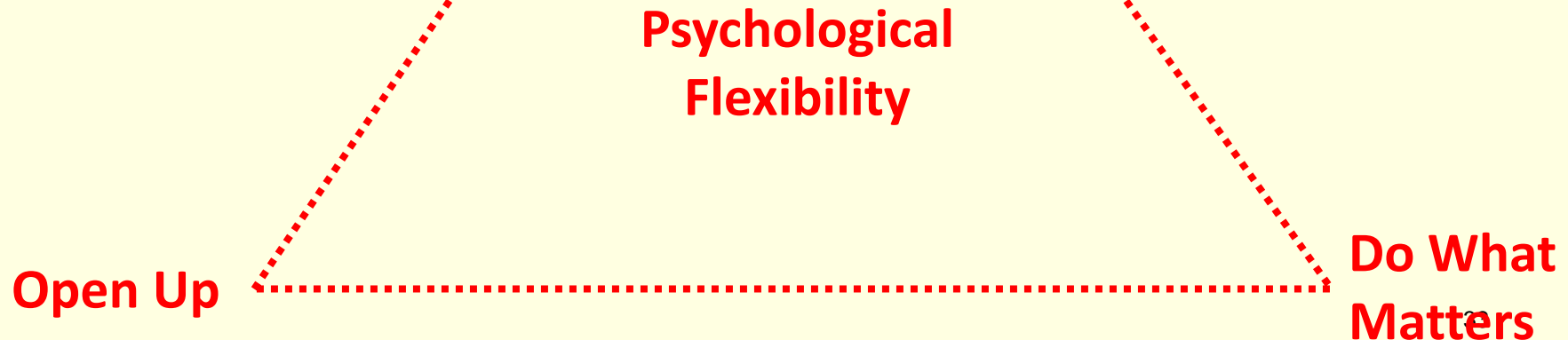
Exercise: Come back to center #1

a) 'Do what matters' **Be Present**

When the bell sounds:

b) 'Be present'

Do this any time,
often as desired



Do what matters \Leftrightarrow Be present

Explore values & goals with the client

When fusion &/or avoidance shows up \Rightarrow be present

If no barriers, when bell rings \Rightarrow be present

E.g. ask client to:

notice what's happening

what's showing up for you?

what is your mind doing?

what do you feel in your body?,

- use 'noticing' language

Exercise: Come back to center #2

a) 'Open up'

When the bell sounds:

b) 'Be present'

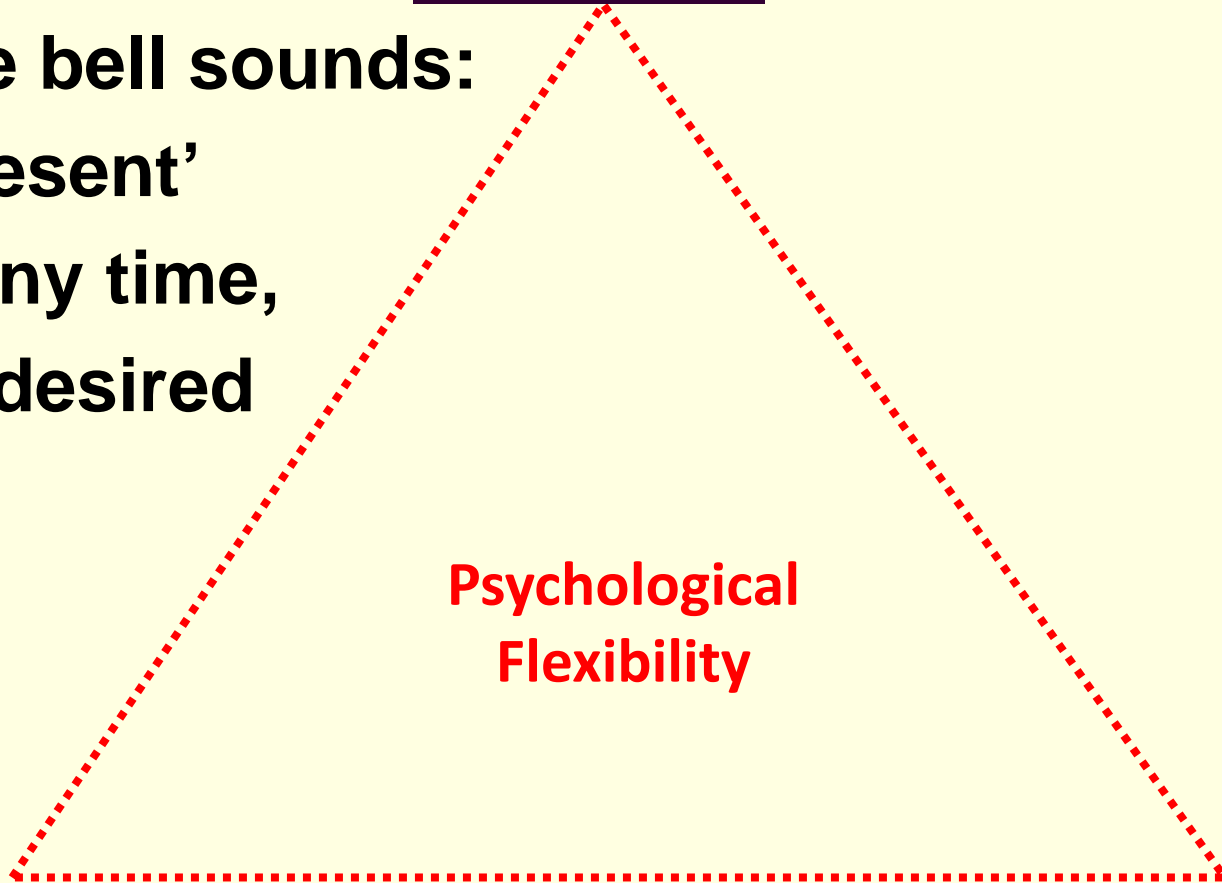
Do this any time,
often as desired

Be Present

**Psychological
Flexibility**

Open Up

**Do What
Matters**



Open up<=> Be present

Ask 'What's stopping you from X,Y,Z?'

If strong fusion/avoidance => be present: 'drop anchor'

Use being present as a launching point for opening up:

Notice what your mind is doing => defusion

Notice what is happening in your body => acceptance

Notice there go your thoughts and feelings, and there's a part of you that can 'step back' and notice them => defusion, acceptance

Workable In-Session Behaviour

What might we look for?

How might we reinforce it?

Reinforcing Workable Behaviour

- 5 overlapping strategies:
1. Do you notice
 2. What is that like for you?
 3. How might this be helpful?
 4. What I notice
 5. What that is like for me

Unworkable In-Session Behaviour

What might we look for?

How might we address it?

Addressing Unworkable Behaviour

Why *don't* we address it?

'TRIGGERS'

Situation
Thoughts
Feelings

**Present Moment,
Defusion,
Acceptance**

Situation: the client is doing some form of problematic behaviour

Thoughts & Feelings

Anxiety

'If I confront this, that's rude/ will destroy rapport/ she'll get angry or upset/ he'll leave/ she'll complain about me' 'She needs to do this!'

B – Behaviour

Something an organism does

- Public
- Private

**Values &
Committed action**

Therapist/coach makes no active attempt to point out, confront, address or interrupt the client's behaviour. Instead, opts for 'active listening'

WHAT'S MORE WORKABLE?

'PAYOFFS'

immediate outcomes that maintain the behaviour

Feeling of relief;
anxiety disappears

**Workability
payoffs VS costs**

Costs:

Client's problematic behaviour persists
Unable to do effective therapy/coaching
Increasing frustration, anxiety/ boredom/ disengagement for the therapist/coach

Contact With The Present Moment

I'm noticing something problematic here and I'd like to share it with you

Acceptance

I'm feeling pretty anxious about it. My heart's racing.

Values

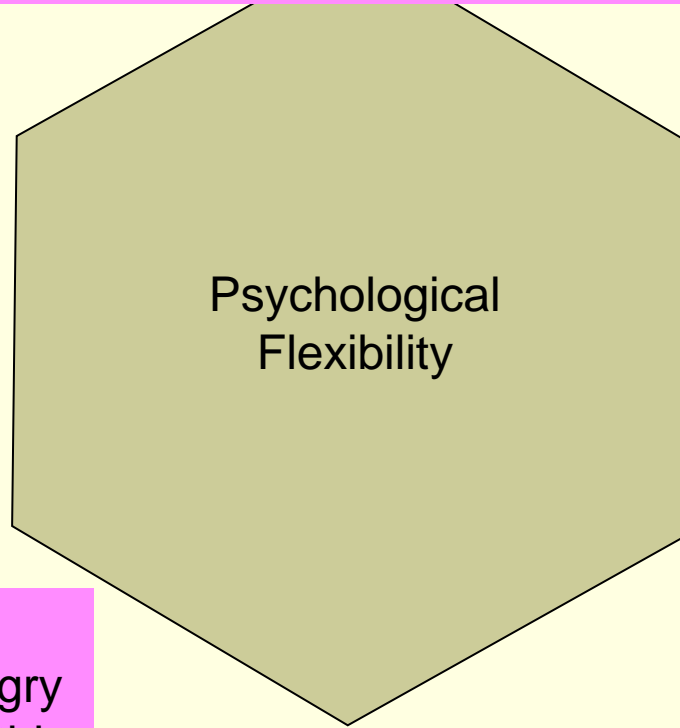
But my aim in here is to help people live better lives – so if I ignore this, I'm not being true to myself and I'm doing you a disservice

Defusion

My mind's telling me you'll be upset or angry or think I'm rude, or this will damage our relationship

Committed Action

So even though I'm feeling really nervous, I'm going to tell you what I've noticed



Self-as-context

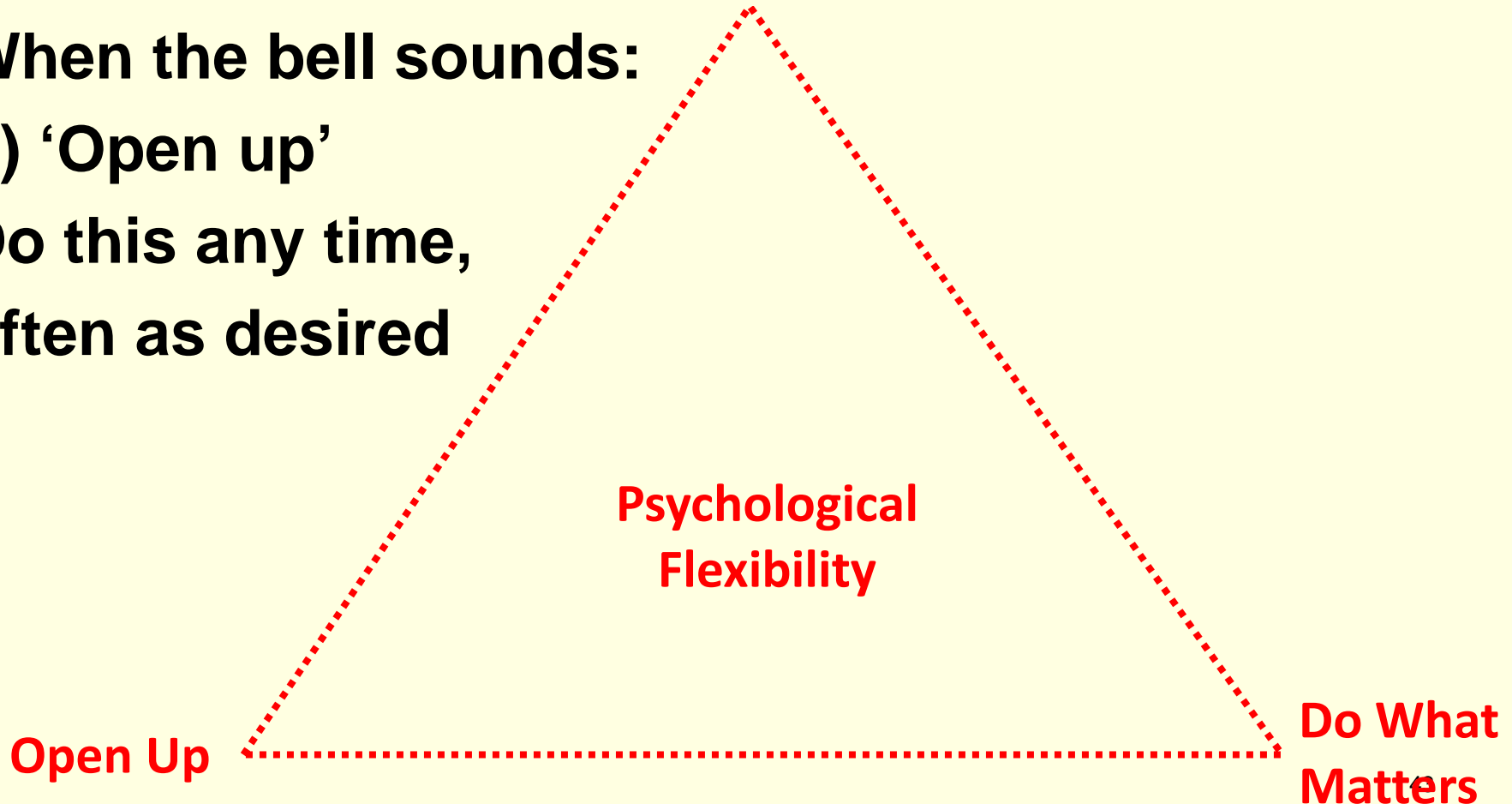
Exercise: Open up \Leftrightarrow Do What Matters

a) 'Do what matters' **Be Present**

When the bell sounds:

b) 'Open up'

Do this any time,
often as desired



Exercise: Open up<=> Do What Matters

Explore values & goals with the client

When fusion &/or avoidance shows up => open up

If necessary, ask 'So what's stopping you?'

After some defusion/acceptance => do what matters

Feel free to go (either way) via 'be present'

If you have time, and it seems relevant, see if you can
'make the link': willingness to make room for these
thoughts and feelings in order to do what matters

Exercise: Reinforcing Workable & Addressing Unworkable Behaviour

1. Do you notice
2. What is that like for you?
3. How might this be helpful/*un*helpful?
4. What I notice
5. What that is like for me

A Common Reply To Questions About Values:

A far more common
function of 'I don't
know':

Validate: yes, right now, you don't know.

So would you be willing to:

Sit with the question a bit longer?

Do an exercise?

Fill in a worksheet?

Do a card sort?

Get People Moving: 3 Factors

1. Small change
2. Positive direction
3. Owned by the client

On a scale of zero to ten, how likely are you to do this?