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Disclosures:

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Relevant Financial Relationships:

Both Joann and Darrah receive royalties from New Harbinger publications for a book co-written on a topic similar to the subject of this presentation, *“ACT in Groups: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Based Skills Training Manual for therapists”*

ACT in Groups

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Benefits of ACT in Groups

- Maximizes the Change Mechanisms
- Optimizes the Therapeutic Relationship
- Enhances Individual Learning
- Harnesses Social Support
- Facilitates Compassion
- Assists with Problematic Responses

Starting with Function

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: Function over form

Group Level

- What is the purpose for the group?
- What are the objectives?
- What are members hoping to take away from their experience?
- What are you hoping your group members will learn?
- What changes are you hoping to see?

Moving with Process - Conclusion

From Westrup & Wright, 2017

Therapist: *(to the group)* Let's just notice how that works. That is a great example of what we do, isn't it? We feel antsy or anxious or uncomfortable in some way and our minds get busy trying to fix it somehow. *(pauses to let the moment settle)*. So maybe we can use this as an opportunity to do something else! Let's take a few moments to notice what is going on for us in this moment *(pause)*. Let's just see if we can notice and gently hold whatever it is we are experiencing. *(Therapist then falls silent and models just sitting and noticing for a minute or two)*

~ The therapist was initially pulled by the content of Barry's concerns, but turned it into an opportunity to work from the process level.

What Are We Shooting For?

Individual Level

- What is he/she hoping for by participating in the group?
- What specific changes do you think would be beneficial?
- What would be the “game changer” for this individual?
- What skills are needed?

Contact with the Present

Acceptance

Value
s



Defusion

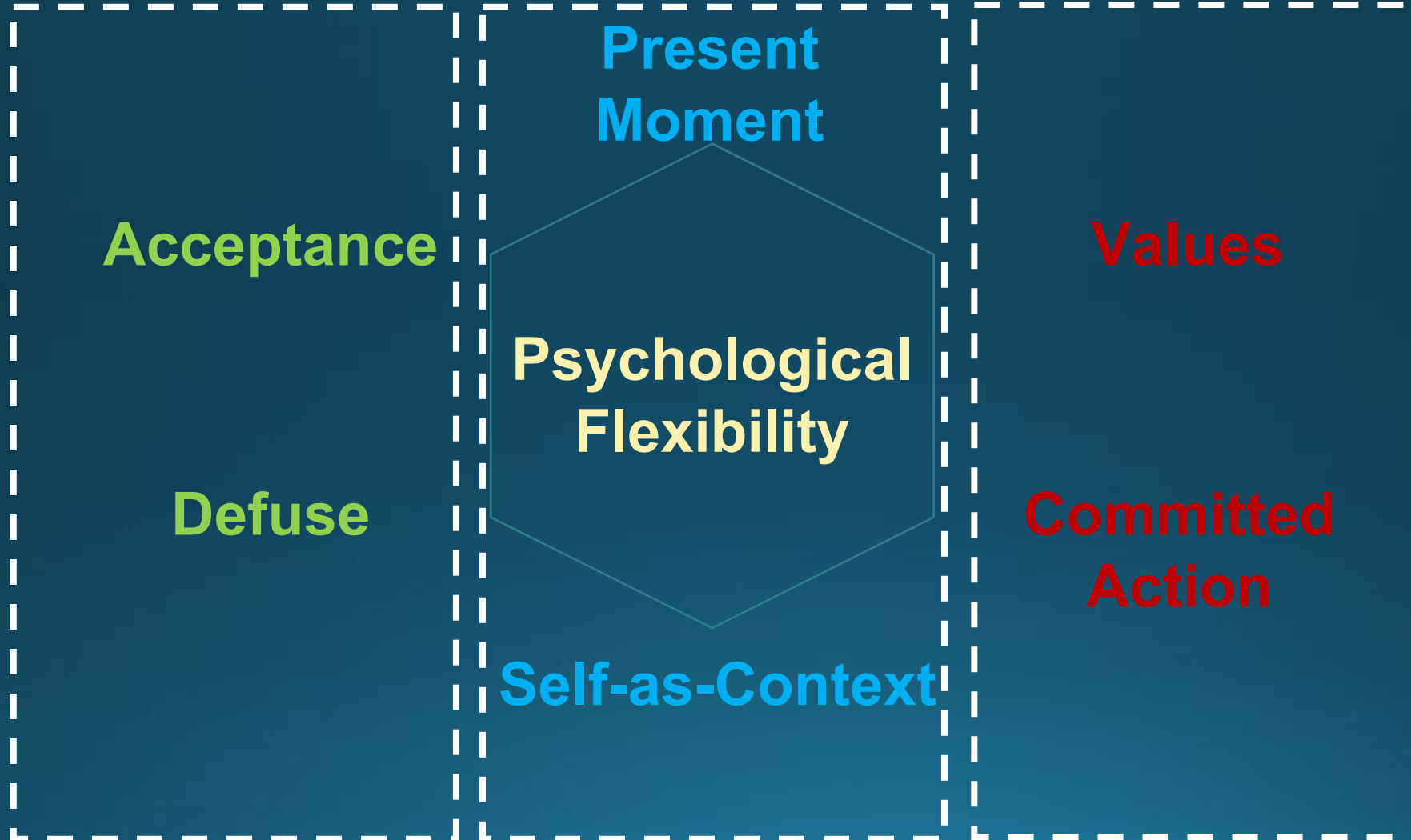
Committed Action

Self as Context

Open

Aware

Engaged



How Do We Get There?

- There is not one, “right way”
- Since the processes are interrelated and ubiquitous, opportunities abound!
- Even if one process is the target, the others come along.
- Various methods of delivering ACT:
 - Focus on a particular core process
 - Work with processes in the moment as the therapy unfolds
 - Work through the core processes sequentially

Contacting the Present

- What are signs this skill is lacking?
- How can you build it up?
 - Explicit discussion
 - Modeling
 - In the moment work
 - Experiential Exercise
 - EX: Notice the room

Willingness

- What are Signs this Skill is Lacking?
- How can you build it up?
 - Explicit discussion
 - Modeling
 - In the moment work
 - Experiential Exercise
 - EX: Tug of War

Defusing from Thoughts

- What are Signs this Skill is Lacking?
- How can you build it up?
 - Explicit discussion
 - Modeling
 - In the moment work
 - Experiential Exercise
 - EX: Label Parade

Self as Context

- What are Signs this Skill is Lacking?
- How can you build it up?
 - Explicit discussion
 - Modeling
 - In the moment work
 - Experiential Exercise
 - EX: “Lifeline”

Values

- What are Signs this Skill is Lacking?
- How can you build it up?
 - Explicit discussion
 - Modeling
 - In the moment work
 - Experiential Exercise
 - EX: Stand up for Your Values

Values Exercise

Westrup & Wright, 2017

- Ask your group the following questions to generate a discussion:
 - 1) What do you want? What do you really, really, *really* want?
 - 2) What kinds of relationships would you like to build?
 - a) With friends, family of origin, partner, children, community
 - 3) What do you dream about during your spare time?
 - 4) What would you like your career to look like in your wildest dreams?
 - 5) What do you want your life to stand for?
 - 6) What kind of person do you want to be?
 - 7) What is important about your spirituality?

Committed Action

- What are Signs this Skill is Lacking?
- How can you build it up?
 - Explicit discussion
 - Modeling
 - In the moment work
 - Experiential Exercise
 - EX: My Committed Actions

Committed Action Exercise

Westrup & Wright, 2017

My _____ committed action

In service of my value of _____, I commit to the following activities

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

Maximizing Experiential Exercises

- Deliberately evoking a “felt experience”
- Group involvement increases engagement and facilitates learning
- Barriers provide learning opportunities too

ACT Group Challenges – The Therapist

- Content V. Process
- Teaching/Telling V. Doing
 - Fusion with Rules
 - Enthusiasm
 - Attachment to the Expert Role
 - Being Right/Persuading
- Avoidance
 - Playing it safe
 - No Oomph
 - Working too Hard
 - Not being Authentic

Sample Group Therapy Conversation – Stuck in Content

From Westrup & Wright, 2017

Barry: So, what's next?

Therapist: Next?

Barry: So what do we do? Where are we going with this?

Therapist: You mean with this therapy?

Barry: Yeah. I understand what you are saying about looking *at* thoughts and not just *from* thoughts – I think. So... now what?

Therapist: So now we can see thoughts as thoughts, as something that's going on.

Barry: Okaaaaaay... So what do I do with that? I'm not sure what this is supposed to do.

Sample Group Therapy Conversation – Stuck in Content (cont.)

From Westrup & Wright, 2017

Barry: So, what's next?

Therapist: Next?

Barry: So what do we do? Where are we going with this?

Therapist: You mean with this therapy?

Barry: Yeah. I understand what you are saying about looking *at* thoughts and not just *from* thoughts – I think. So... now what?

Therapist: *(pausing to contact the present moment and slow things down a bit)* Hmm. Can I ask you what you are experiencing right now?

Barry: I dunno...I feel antsy...I'm not sure where we are headed with all of this.

Therapist: Yeah. *(unhurried)* So antsy... sort of on edge or anxious *(Barry nods)* And can I ask you whether this is something you do when your feeling antsy or anxious?

Barry: What do you mean?

Therapist: You are feeling on edge, antsy...and so you are asking questions, trying to figure things out.

Barry: *(thinks)* Yeah. I guess... I don't like it Oh, so I'm trying to have control.

ACT Group Challenges – Individual Members

- Story Telling
- Being a Victim
- Trust
- Junior Therapist
- Rescuer
- Group Culture
 - Avoidance
 - Passivity
 - Collusion