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Background

Assessment often invokes stress or anxiety. In curriculumdevelopment, there is an increasing emphasis for medical educators to consider the health and well-being of their students. This study aims to determine the **perceived stress** and subsequent **stressmanagement techniques** of students during a cumulative assessment

Method

In a focus-group interview setting, 2 groups of medical students (n=7, n=5) discussed this topic on 4 different moments throughout their first year of college. The 'ACT hexaflex' was used as a framework for the interview guide. Special attention was given to 'Acceptance' and 'Committed Action'. The study was carried out at

program.

Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

Student: "Right now, I'm satisfied with my study results. So, it's no use to get carried away with feelings of distress."

Student: "Sometimes, when the amount of tasks overwhelms me, I just drop the whole thing."

DOMINANCE OF THE CONCEPTUALIZED PAST AND FUTURE; LIMITED SELF-KNOWLEDGE

PSYCHOLOGICAL

INFLEXIBILITY

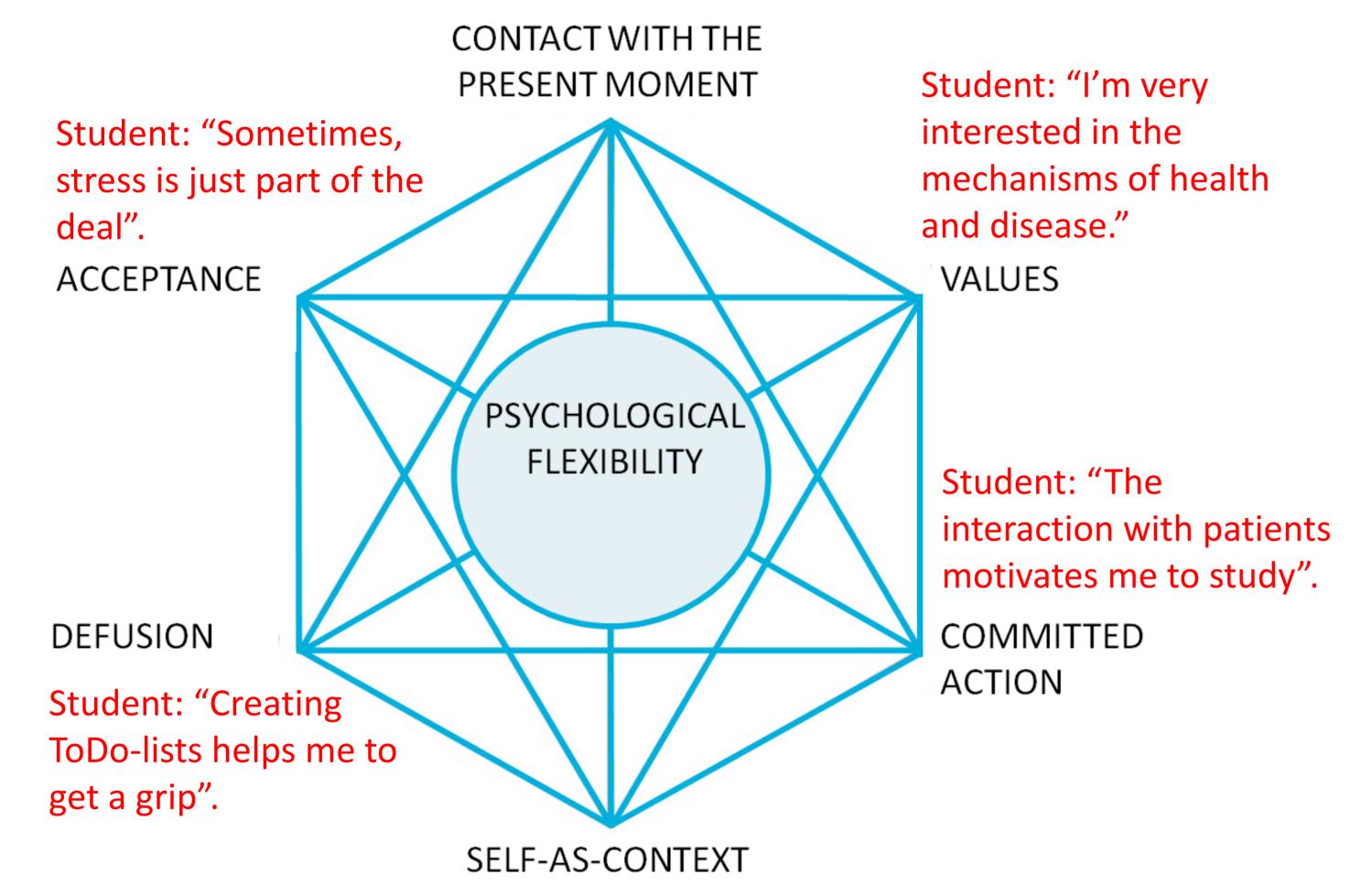
EXPERIENTIAL AVOIDANCE Student: "Prior to the exam, my drinking and smoking levels increase massively. It helps me to forget."

COGNITIVE

LACK OF VALUES CLARITY/CONTACT

Student: "It's just a matter of running to stand still. After the exam I want to reward myself".

UNWORKABLE



Student: "I realize that stress will kick in now and then."

FUSION Student: "I don't want to be a C-student. I want to become a Straight-A-Doctor". ATTACHMENT TO THE CONCEPTUALIZED SELF

Student: "I'm calm. I never stress out. It's just not part of who I am." ACTION

Interviewer: "When I mention the word 'exam', what is the first thing that pops into mind?"

Students: "Cramming." – "Sleep deprivation." – "Munching chocolate." –

"Inability to eat at all."

Figures derived from: ACT Made Simple / R. Harris, 2009.

Discussion

The interview-quotes illustrate, that students often experience assessment as a **battlefield** in which they hope to **achieve victory**. Experiential avoidance of anxiety came in different shapes and sizes. We hypothesize that a **more committed** and **deliberate coping style** – as used in **ACT** – could contribute to students' well-being. In future research, we will explore, implement and evaluate the possibilities to enhance psychological



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