



# How do they ACT?



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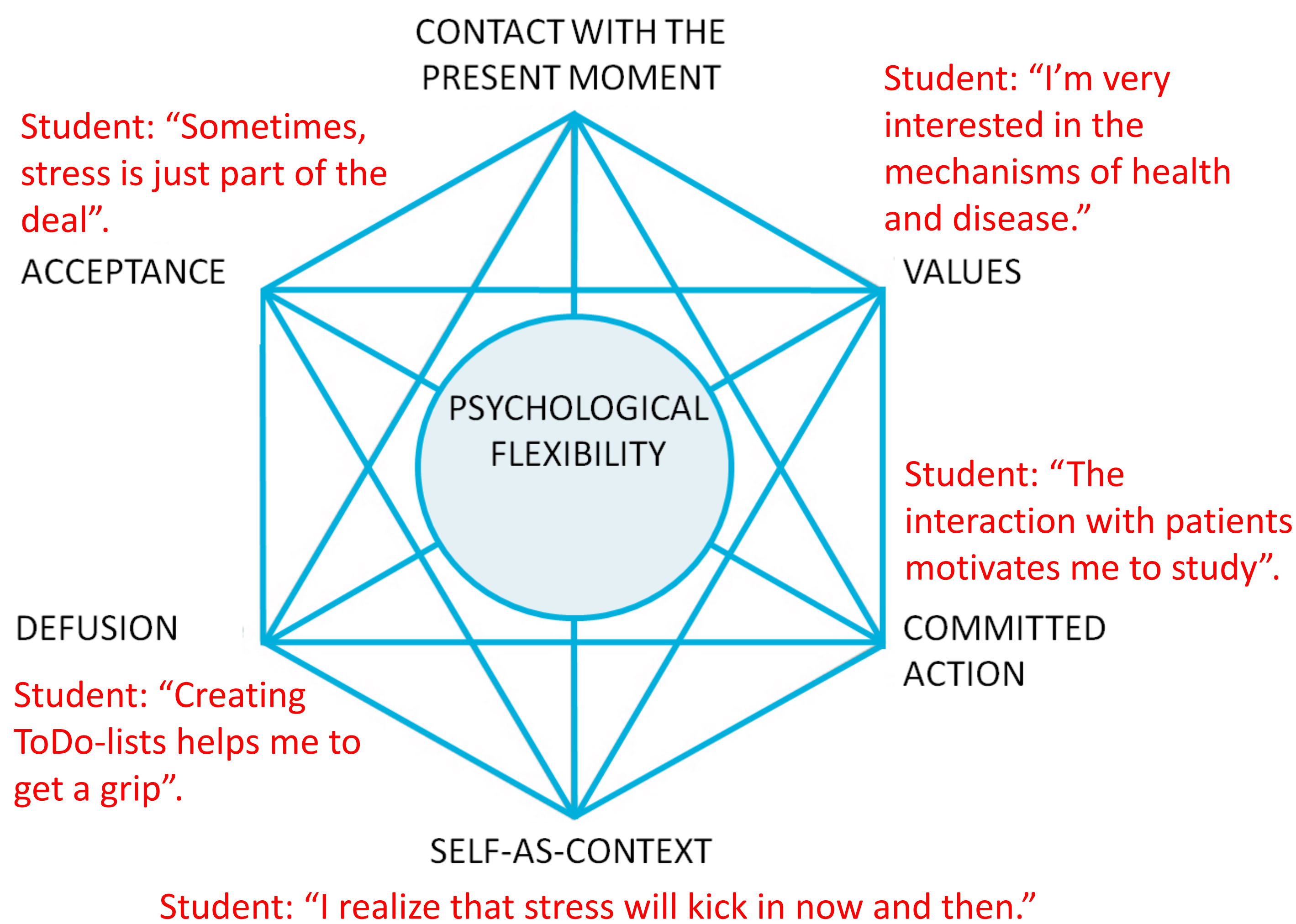
## Background

**Assessment** often invokes stress or anxiety. In curriculum-development, 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 **stress-management techniques** of students during a cumulative assessment program.

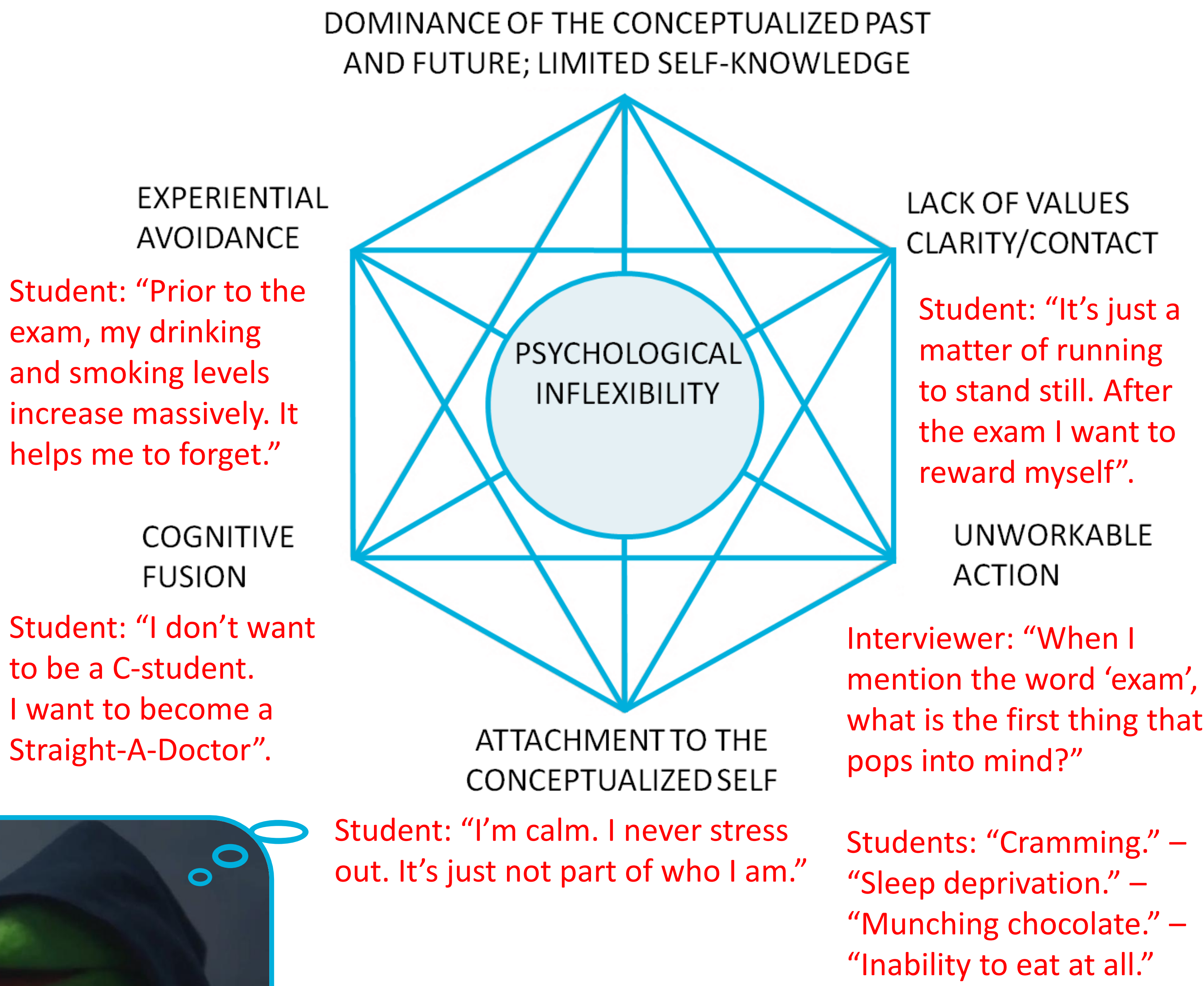
## Method

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 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."



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 flexibility of our students during periods of assessment.

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